LOOK FOR THE EXCITING NEW RIVERWORLD MOVIE, ONLY ON SYFY!

“A BLEND OF INTELLECTUAL DARING AND PULP-FICTION PROSE.”
—THE NEW YORK TIMES

RIVERWORLD

PHILIP JOSÉ FARMER

INCLUDING TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO AND THE FABULOUS RIVERBOAT
PRAISE FOR

Riverworld

“[A] jolting conception, brought off with tremendous skill.”

—The Times (London)

“Impressively imaginative and well-researched.”

—Evening Standard (London)

“One of the most imaginative worlds in science fiction!”

—Booklist
CONTENTS

To Your Scattered Bodies Go

The Fabulous Riverboat
To Your Scattered Bodies Go
His wife had held him in her arms as if she could keep death away from him.

He had cried out, “My God, I am a dead man!”

The door to the room had opened, and he had seen a giant, black, one-humped camel outside and had heard the tinkle of the bells on its harness as the hot desert wind touched them. Then a huge black face topped by a great black turban had appeared in the doorway. The black eunuch had come in through the door, moving like a cloud, with a gigantic scimitar in his hand. Death, the Destroyer of Delights and the Sunderer of Society, had arrived at last.

Blackness. Nothingness. He did not even know that his heart had given out forever. Nothingness.

Then his eyes opened. His heart was beating strongly. He was strong, very strong! All the pain of the gout in his feet, the agony in his liver, the torture in his heart, all were gone.
It was so quiet he could hear the blood moving in his head. He was alone in a world of soundlessness.

A bright light of equal intensity was everywhere. He could see, yet he did not understand what he was seeing. What were these things above, beside, below him? Where was he?

He tried to sit up and felt, numbly, a panic. There was nothing to sit up upon because he was hanging in nothingness. The attempt sent him forward and over, very slowly, as if he were in a bath of thin treacle. A foot from his fingertips was a rod of bright red metal. The rod came from above, from infinity, and went on down to infinity. He tried to grasp it because it was the nearest solid object, but something invisible was resisting him. It was as if lines of some force were pushing against him, repelling him.

Slowly, he turned over in a somersault. Then the resistance halted him with his fingertips about six inches from the rod. He straightened his body out and moved forward a fraction of an inch. At the same time, his body began to rotate on its longitudinal axis. He sucked in air with a loud sawing noise. Though he knew no hold
existed for him, he could not help flailing his arms in panic to try to seize onto something.

Now he was face “down,” or was it “up”? Whatever the direction, it was opposite to that toward which he had been looking when he had awakened. Not that this mattered. “Above” him and “below” him the view was the same. He was suspended in space, kept from falling by an invisible and unfelt cocoon. Six feet “below” him was the body of a woman with a very pale skin. She was naked and completely hairless. She seemed to be asleep. Her eyes were closed, and her breasts rose and fell gently. Her legs were together and straight out, and her arms were by her side. She turned slowly like a chicken on a spit.

The same force that was rotating her was also rotating him. He spun slowly away from her, saw other naked and hairless bodies, men, women, and children, opposite him in silent spinning rows. Above him was the rotating naked and hairless body of a Negro.

He lowered his head so that he could see along his own body. He was naked and hairless, too. His skin was smooth, and the muscles of his belly were ridged,
and his thighs were packed with strong young muscles. The veins that had stood out like blue mole-ridges were gone. He no longer had the body of the enfeebled and sick sixty-nine-year-old man who had been dying only a moment ago. And the hundred or so scars were gone.

He realized then that there were no old men or women among the bodies surrounding him. All seemed to be about twenty-five years old, though it was difficult to determine the exact age, since the hairless heads and pubes made them seem older and younger at the same time.

He had boasted that he knew no fear. Now fear ripped away the cry forming in this throat. His fear pressed down on him and squeezed the new life from him.

He had been stunned at first because he was still living. Then his position in space and the arrangement of his new environment had frozen his senses. He was seeing and feeling through a thick semiopaque window. After a few seconds something snapped inside him. He could almost hear it, as if a window had suddenly been raised.
The world took a shape which he could grasp, though he could not comprehend it. Above him, on both sides, below him, as far as he could see, bodies floated. They were arranged in vertical and horizontal rows. The up-and-down ranks were separated by red rods, slender as broomsticks, one of which was twelve inches from the feet of the sleepers and the other twelve inches from their heads. Each body was spaced about six feet from the body above and below and on each side.

The rods came up from an abyss without bottom and soared into an abyss without ceiling. That grayness into which the rods and the bodies, up and down, right and left, disappeared was neither the sky nor the earth. There was nothing in the distance except the lackluster of infinity.

On one side was a dark man with Tuscan features. On his other side was an Asiatic Indian and beyond her a large Nordic-looking man. Not until the third revolution was he able to determine what was so odd about the man. The right arm, from a point just below the elbow, was red. It seemed to lack the outer layer of skin.
A few seconds later, several rows away, he saw a male adult body lacking the skin and all the muscles of the face.

There were other bodies that were not quite complete. Far away, glimpsed unclearly, was a skeleton and a jumble of organs inside it.

He continued turning and observing while his heart slammed against his chest with terror. By then he understood that he was in some colossal chamber and that the metal rods were radiating some force that somehow supported and revolved millions—maybe billions—of human beings.

Where was this place?

Certainly, it was not the city of Trieste of the Austro-Hungarian Empire of 1890.

It was like no hell or heaven of which he had ever heard or read, and he had thought that he was acquainted with every theory of the afterlife.

He had died. Now he was alive. He had scoffed all his life at a life-after-death. For once, he could not deny that he had been wrong. But there was no one present to say, “I told you so, you damned infidel!”
Of all the millions, he alone was awake.

As he turned at an estimated rate of one complete revolution per ten seconds, he saw something else that caused him to gasp with amazement. Five rows away was a body that seemed, at first glance, to be human. But no member of *Homo sapiens* had three fingers and a thumb on each hand and four toes on each foot. Nor a nose and thin black leathery lips like a dog’s. Nor a scrotum with many small knobs. Nor ears with such strange convolutions.

Terror faded away. His heart quit beating so swiftly, though it did not return to normal. His brain unfroze. He must get out of this situation where he was as helpless as a hog on a turnspit. He would get to somebody who could tell him what he was doing here, how he had come here, why he was here.

To decide was to act.

He drew up his legs and kicked and found that the action, the reaction, rather, drove him forward a half-inch. Again, he kicked and moved against the resistance. But, as he paused, he was slowly moved back toward his original location. And his legs and arms
were gently pushed toward their original rigid position.

In a frenzy, kicking his legs and moving his arms in a swimmer’s breaststroke, he managed to fight toward the rod. The closer he got to it, the stronger the web of force became. He did not give up. If he did, he would be back where he had been and without enough strength to begin fighting again. It was not his nature to give up until all his strength had been expended.

He was breathing hoarsely, his body was coated with sweat, his arms and legs moved as if in a thick jelly, and his progress was imperceptible. Then, the fingertips of his left hand touched the rod. It felt warm and hard.

Suddenly, he knew which way was “down.” He fell.

The touch had broken the spell. The webs of air around him snapped soundlessly, and he was plunging.

He was close enough to the rod to seize it with one hand. The sudden checking of his fall brought his hip up against the rod with a painful impact. The skin of his hand burned as he slid down the rod, and then his other hand clutched the rod, and he had stopped.

In front of him, on the other side of the rod, the bodies had started to fall. They descended with the
velocity of a falling body on Earth, and each maintained its stretched-out position and the original distance between the body above and below. They even continued to revolve.

It was then that the puffs of air on his naked sweating back made him twist around on the rod. Behind him, in the vertical row of bodies that he had just occupied, the sleepers were also falling. One after the other, as if methodically dropped through a trapdoor, spinning slowly, they hurtled by him. Their heads missed him by a few inches. He was fortunate not to have been knocked off the rod and sent plunging into the abyss along with them.

In stately procession, they fell. Body after body shooting down on both sides of the rod, while the other rows of millions upon millions slept on.

For a while, he stared. Then he began counting bodies; he had always been a devoted enumerator. But when he had counted 3,001, he quit. After that he gazed at the cataract of flesh. How far up, how immeasurably far up, were they stacked? And how far down could they fall? Unwittingly, he had precipitated
them when his touch had disrupted the force emanating from the rod.

He could not climb up the rod, but he could climb down it. He began to let himself down, and then he looked upward and he forgot about the bodies hurtling by him. Somewhere overhead, a humming was overriding the whooshing sound of the falling bodies.

A narrow craft, of some bright green substance and shaped like a canoe, was sinking between the column of the fallers and the neighboring column of suspended. The aerial canoe had no visible means of support, he thought, and it was a measure of his terror that he did not even think about his pun. No visible means of support. Like a magical vessel out of *The Thousand and One Nights*.

A face appeared over the edge of the vessel. The craft stopped, and the humming noise ceased. Another face was by the first. Both had long, dark, and straight hair. Presently, the faces withdrew, the humming was renewed, and the canoe again descended toward him. When it was about five feet above him it halted. There was a single small symbol on the green bow: a white
spiral that exploded to the right. One of the canoe’s occupants spoke in a language with many vowels and a distinct and frequently recurring glottal stop. It sounded like Polynesian.

Abruptly, the invisible cocoon around him reasserted itself. The falling bodies began to slow in their rate of descent and then stopped. The man on the rod felt the retaining force close in on him and lift him up. Though he clung desperately to the rod, his legs were moved up and then away and his body followed it. Soon he was looking downward. His hands were torn loose; he felt as if his grip on life, on sanity, on the world, had also been torn away. He began to drift upward and to revolve. He went by the aerial canoe and rose above it. The two men in the canoe were naked, dark-skinned as Yemenite Arabs, and handsome. Their features were Nordic, resembling those of some Icelanders he had known.

One of them lifted a hand which held a pencil-sized metal object. The man sighted along it as if he were going to shoot something from it.

The man floating in the air shouted with rage and hate
and frustration and flailed his arms to swim toward the machine.

“I’ll kill!” he screamed. “Kill! Kill!”

Oblivion came again.
God was standing over him as he lay on the grass by the waters and the weeping willows. He lay wide-eyed and as weak as a baby just born. God was poking him in the ribs with the end of an iron cane. God was a tall man of middle age. He had a long black forked beard, and He was wearing the Sunday best of an English gentleman of the 53rd year of Queen Victoria’s reign.

“You’re late,” God said. “Long past due for the payment of your debt, you know.”

“What debt?” Richard Francis Burton said. He passed his fingertips over his ribs to make sure that all were still there.

“You owe for the flesh,” replied God, poking him again with the cane. “Not to mention the spirit. You owe for the flesh and the spirit, which are one and the same thing.”

Burton struggled to get up onto his feet. Nobody,
not even God, was going to punch Richard Burton in the ribs and get away without a battle.

God, ignoring the futile efforts, pulled a large gold watch from His vest pocket, unsnapped its heavy enscribed gold lid, looked at the hands, and said, “Long past due.”

God held out His other hand, its palm turned up.

“Pay up, sir. Otherwise, I’ll be forced to foreclose.”

“Foreclose on what?”

Darkness fell. God began to dissolve into the darkness. It was then that Burton saw that God resembled himself. He had the same black straight hair, the same Arabic face with the dark stabbing eyes, high cheekbones, heavy lips, and the thrust-out, deeply cleft chin. The same long deep scars, witnesses of the Somali javelin which pierced his jaws in that fight at Berbera, were on His cheeks. His hands and feet were small, contrasting with His broad shoulders and massive chest. And He had the long thick moustachios and the long forked beard that had caused the Bedouin to name Burton “the
“You look like the Devil,” Burton said, but God had become just another shadow in the darkness.
Burton was still sleeping, but he was so close to the surface of consciousness that he was aware that he had been dreaming. Light was replacing the night. Then his eyes did open. And he did not know where he was.

A blue sky was above. A gentle breeze flowed over his naked body. His hairless head and his back and legs and the palms of his hands were against grass. He turned his head to the right and saw a plain covered with very short, very green, very thick grass. The plain sloped gently upward for a mile. Beyond the plain was a range of hills that started out mildly, then became steeper and higher and very irregular in shape as they climbed toward the mountains. The hills seemed to run for about two and a half miles. All were covered with trees, some of which blazed with scarlets, azures, bright greens, flaming yellows, and deep pinks. The mountains beyond the hills rose suddenly, perpendicularly, and
unbelievably high. They were black and bluish-green, looking like a glassy igneous rock with huge splotches of lichen covering at least a quarter of the surface.

Between him and the hills were many human bodies. The closest one, only a few feet away, was that of the white woman who had been below him in that vertical row.

He wanted to rise up, but he was sluggish and numb. All he could do for the moment, and that required a strong effort, was to turn his head to the left. There were more naked bodies there on a plain that sloped down to a river perhaps ten yards away. The river was about a mile wide, and on its other side was another plain, probably about a mile broad and sloping upward to foothills covered with more of the trees and then the towering precipitous black and bluish-green mountains. That was the east, he thought frozenly. The sun had just risen over the top of the mountain there.

Almost by the river’s edge was a strange structure. It was a gray red-flecked granite and was shaped like a mushroom. Its broad base could not be more than five feet high, and the mushroom top had a diameter of
about fifty feet.

He managed to rise far enough to support himself on one elbow.

There were more mushroom-shaped granites along both sides of the river.

Everywhere on the plain were unclothed baldheaded human beings, spaced about six feet apart. Most were still on their backs and gazing into the sky. Others were beginning to stir, to look around, or even sitting up.

He sat up also and felt his head and face with both hands. They were smooth.

His body was not that wrinkled, ridged, bumpy, withered body of the sixty-nine-year-old which had lain on his deathbed. It was the smooth-skinned and powerfully muscled body he had when he was twenty-five years old. The same body he had when he was floating between those rods in that dream. Dream? It had seemed too vivid to be a dream. It was not a dream.

Around his wrist was a thin band of transparent material. It was connected to a six-inch-long strap of the same material. The other end was clenched about a
metallic arc, the handle of a grayish metal cylinder with a closed cover.

Idly, not concentrating because his mind was too sluggish, he lifted the cylinder. It weighed less than a pound, so it could not be of iron even if it was hollow. Its diameter was a foot and a half and it was over two and a half feet tall.

Everyone had a similar object strapped to their wrist.

Unsteadily, his heart beginning to pick up speed as his senses became unnumbed, he got to his feet.

Others were rising, too. Many had faces which were slack or congealed with an icy wonder. Some looked fearful. Their eyes were wide and rolling; their chests rose and fell swiftly; their breaths hissed out. Some were shaking as if an icy wind had swept over them, though the air was pleasantly warm.

The strange thing, the really alien and frightening thing, was the almost complete silence. Nobody said a word; there was only the hissing of breaths of those near him, a tiny slap as a man smacked himself on his leg, a low whistling from a woman.

Their mouths hung open, as if they were about to say
They began moving about, looking into each other’s faces, sometimes reaching out to lightly touch another. They shuffled their bare feet, turned this way, turned back the other way, gazed at the hills, the trees covered with the huge vividly colored blooms, the lichenous and soaring mountains, the sparkling and green river, the mushroom-shaped stones, the straps and the gray metallic containers.

Some felt their naked skulls and their faces.

Everybody was encased in a mindless motion and in silence.

Suddenly, a woman began moaning. She sank to her knees, threw her head and her shoulders back, and she howled. At the same time, far down the riverbank, somebody else howled.

It was as if these two cries were signals. Or as if the two were double keys to the human voice and had unlocked it.

The men and women and children began screaming or sobbing or tearing at their faces with their nails or beating themselves on their breasts or falling on their
knees and lifting their hands in prayer or throwing
themselves down and trying to bury their faces in the
grass as if, ostrich-like, to avoid being seen, or rolling
back and forth, barking like dogs or howling like
wolves.

The terror and the hysteria gripped Burton. He
wanted to go to his knees and pray for salvation from
judgment. He wanted mercy. He did not want to see
the blinding face of God appear over the mountains, a
face brighter than the sun. He was not as brave and as
guiltless as he had thought. Judgment would be so
terrifying, so utterly final, that he could not bear to think
about it.

Once, he had had a fantasy about standing before
God after he had died. He had been little and naked
and in the middle of a vast plain, like this, but he had
been all alone. Then God, great as a mountain, had
strode toward him. And he, Burton, had stood his
ground and defied God.

There was no God here, but he fled anyway. He ran
across the plain, pushing men and women out of the
way, running around some, leaping over others as they
rolled on the ground. As he ran, he howled, “No! No! No!” His arms windmilled to fend off unseen terrors. The cylinder strapped to his wrist whirled around and around.

When he was panting so that he could no longer howl, and his legs and arms were hung with weights, and his lungs burned, and his heart boomed, he threw himself down under the first of the trees.

After a while, he sat up and faced toward the plain. The mob noise had changed from screams and howls to a gigantic chattering. The majority were talking to each other, though it did not seem that anybody was listening. Burton could not hear any of the individual words. Some men and women were embracing and kissing as if they had been acquainted in their previous lives and now were holding each other to reassure each other of their identities and of their reality.

There were a number of children in the great crowd. Not one was under five years of age, however. Like their elders, their heads were hairless. Half of them were weeping, rooted to one spot. Others, also crying out, were running back and forth, looking into the faces
above them, obviously seeking their parents.

He was beginning to breathe more easily. He stood up and turned around. The tree under which he was standing was a red pine (sometimes wrongly called a Norway pine) about two hundred feet tall. Beside it was a tree of a type he had never seen. He doubted that it had existed on Earth. (He was sure that he was not on Earth, though he could not have given any specific reasons at that moment.) It had a thick, gnarled blackish trunk and many thick branches bearing triangular six-feet-long leaves, green with scarlet lacings. It was about three hundred feet high. There were also trees that looked like white and black oaks, firs, Western yew, and lodgepole pine.

Here and there were clumps of tall bamboo-like plants, and everywhere that there were no trees or bamboo was a grass about three feet high. There were no animals in sight. No insects and no birds.

He looked around for a stick or a club. He did not have the slightest idea what was on the agenda for humanity, but if it was left unsupervised or uncontrolled it would soon be reverting to its normal state. Once the
shock was over, the people would be looking out for themselves, and that meant that some would be bullying others.

He found nothing useful as a weapon. Then it occurred to him that the metal cylinder could be used as a weapon. He banged it against a tree. Though it had little weight, it was extremely hard.

He raised the lid, which was hinged inside at one end. The hollow interior had six snapdown rings of metal, three on each side and spaced so that each could hold a deep cup or dish or rectangular container of gray metal. All the containers were empty. He closed the lid. Doubtless he would find out in time what the function of the cylinder was.

Whatever else had happened, resurrection had not resulted in bodies of fragile misty ectoplasm. He was all bone and blood and flesh.

Though he still felt somewhat detached from reality, as if he had been disengaged from the gears of the world, he was emerging from his shock.

He was thirsty. He would have to go down and drink from the river and hope that it would not be poisoned.
At this thought, he grinned wryly, and stroked his upper lip. His finger felt disappointed. That was a curious reaction, he thought, and then he remembered that his thick moustache was gone. Oh, yes, he had hoped that the riverwater would not be poisoned. What a strange thought! Why should the dead be brought back to life only to be killed again? But he stood for a long while under the tree. He hated to go back through that madly talking, hysterically sobbing crowd to reach the river. Here, away from the mob, he was free from much of the terror and the panic and the shock that covered them like a sea. If he ventured back, he would be caught up in their emotions again.

Presently, he saw a figure detach itself from the naked throng and walk toward him. He saw that it was not human.

It was then that Burton was sure that this Resurrection Day was not the one which any religion had stated would occur. Burton had not believed in the God portrayed by the Christians, Moslems, Hindus, or any faith. In fact, he was not sure that he believed in any Creator whatsoever. He had believed in Richard Francis Burton and a few friends. He was sure that
when he died, the world would cease to exist.
Waking up after death, in this valley by this river, he had been powerless to defend himself against the doubts that existed in every man exposed to an early religious conditioning and to an adult society which preached its convictions at every chance.

Now, seeing the alien approach, he was sure that there was some other explanation for this event than a supernatural one. There was a physical, a scientific, reason for his being here; he did not have to resort to Judeo-Christian-Moslem myths for cause.

The creature, it, he—it undoubtedly was a male—was a biped about six feet eight inches tall. The pink-skinned body was very thin; there were three fingers and a thumb on each hand and four very long and thin toes on each foot. There were two dark red spots below the male nipples on the chest. The face was semihuman. Thick black eyebrows swept down to the protruding cheekbones and flared out to cover them
with a brownish down. The sides of his nostrils were fringed with a thin membrane about a sixteenth of an inch long. The thick pad of cartilage on the end of his nose was deeply cleft. The lips were thin, leathery, and black. The ears were lobeless and the convolutions within were nonhuman. His scrotum looked as if it contained many small testes.

He had seen this creature floating in the ranks a few rows away in that nightmare place.

The creature stopped a few feet away, smiled, and revealed quite human teeth. He said, "I hope you speak English. However, I can speak with some fluency in Russian, Mandarin Chinese, or Hindustani."

Burton felt a slight shock, as if a dog or an ape had spoken to him.

"You speak Midwestern American English," he replied. "Quite well, too. Although too precisely."

"Thank you," the creature said. "I followed you because you seemed the only person with enough sense to get away from that chaos. Perhaps you have some explanation for this...what do you call it...resurrection?"
“No more than you,” Burton said. “In fact, I don’t have any explanation for your existence, before or after resurrection.”

The thick eyebrows of the alien twitched, a gesture which Burton was to find indicated surprise or puzzlement.

“No? That is strange. I would have sworn that not one of the six billion of Earth’s inhabitants had not heard of or seen me on TV.”

“TV?”

The creature’s brows twitched again.

“You don’t know what TV....”

His voice trailed, then he smiled again.

“Of course, how stupid of me! You must have died before I came to Earth!”

“When was that?”

The alien’s eyebrows rose (equivalent to a human frown as Burton would find), and he said slowly, “Let’s see. I believe it was, in your chronology, A.D. 2002. When did you die?”

“It must have been in A.D. 1890,” Burton said. The
creature had brought back his sense that all this was not real. He ran his tongue around his mouth; the back teeth he had lost when the Somali spear ran through his cheeks were now replaced. But he was still circumcised, and the men on the riverbank—most of whom had been crying out in the Austrian-German, Italian, or the Slovenian of Trieste—were also circumcised. Yet, in his time, most of the males in that area would have been uncircumcised.

“At least,” Burton added, “I remember nothing after October 20, 1890.”

“Aaab!” the creature said. “So, I left my native planet approximately 200 years before you died. My planet? It was a satellite of that star you Terrestrials call Tau Ceti. We placed ourselves in suspended animation, and, when our ship approached your sun, we were automatically thawed out, and…but you do not know what I am talking about?”

“Not quite. Things are happening too fast. I would like to get details later. What is your name?”

“Monat Grrautut. Yours?”

“Richard Francis Burton at your service.”
He bowed slightly and smiled. Despite the strangeness of the creature and some repulsive physical aspects, Burton found himself warming to him.

“The late Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton,” he added. “Most recently Her Majesty’s Consul in the Austro-Hungarian port of Trieste.”

“Elizabeth?”

“I lived in the nineteenth century, not the sixteenth.”

“A Queen Elizabeth reigned over Great Britain in the twentieth century,” Monat said.

He turned to look toward the riverbank.

“Why are they so afraid? All the human beings I met were either sure that there would be no afterlife or else that they would get preferential treatment in the hereafter.”

Burton grinned and said, “Those who denied the hereafter are sure they’re in Hell because they denied it. Those who knew they would go to Heaven are shocked, I would imagine, to find themselves naked. You see, most of the illustrations of our afterlives showed those in Hell as naked and those in Heaven as
being clothed. So, if you’re resurrected bare-ass naked, you must be in Hell.”

“You seem amused,” Monat said.

“I wasn’t so amused a few minutes ago,” Burton said. “And I’m shaken. Very shaken. But seeing you here makes me think that things are not what people thought they would be. They seldom are. And God, if He’s going to make an appearance, does not seem to be in a hurry about it. I think there’s an explanation for this, but it won’t match any of the conjectures I knew on Earth.”

“I doubt we’re on Earth,” Monat said. He pointed upward with long slim fingers which bore thick cartilage pads instead of nails.

He said, “If you look steadily there, with your eyes shielded, you can see another celestial body near the sun. It is not the moon.”

Burton cupped his hands over his eyes, the metal cylinder on his shoulder, and stared at the point indicated. He saw a faintly glowing body which seemed to be an eighth of the size of a full moon. When he put his hands down, he said, “A star?”
Monat said, “I believe so. I thought I saw several other very faint bodies elsewhere in the sky, but I’m not sure. We will know when night comes.”

“Where do you think we are?”

“I would not know.”

Monat gestured at the sun.

“It is rising and so it will descend, and then night should come. I think that it would be best to prepare for the night. And for other events. It is warm and getting warmer, but the night may be cold and it might rain. We should build a shelter of some sort. And we should also think about finding food. Though I imagine that this device”—he indicated the cylinder—“will feed us.”

Burton said, “What makes you think that?”

“I looked inside mine. It contains dishes and cups, all empty now, but obviously made to be filled.”

Burton felt less unreal. The being—the Tau Cetan!—talked so pragmatically, so sensibly, that he provided an anchor to which Burton could tie his senses before they drifted away again. And, despite the repulsive alienness of the creature, he exuded a friendliness and an
openness that warmed Burton. Moreover, any creature that came from a civilization which could span many trillions of miles of interstellar space must have very valuable knowledge and resources.

Others were beginning to separate themselves from the crowd. A group of about ten men and women walked slowly toward him. Some were talking, but others were silent and wide-eyed. They did not seem to have a definite goal in mind; they just floated along like a cloud driven by a wind. When they got near Burton and Monat, they stopped walking.

A man trailing the group especially attracted Burton's scrutiny. Monat was obviously nonhuman, but this fellow was subhuman or prehuman. He stood about five feet tall. He was squat and powerfully muscled. His head was thrust forward on a bowed and very thick neck. The forehead was low and slanting. The skull was long and narrow. Enormous supraorbital ridges shadowed dark brown eyes. The nose was a smear of flesh with arching nostrils, and the bulging bones of his jaws pushed his thin lips out. He may have been covered with as much hair as an ape at one time, but now, like everybody else, he was stripped of hair.
The huge hands looked as if they could squeeze water from a stone.

He kept looking behind him as if he feared that someone was sneaking up on him. The human beings moved away from him when he approached them.

But then another man walked up to him and said something to the subhuman in English. It was evident that the man did not expect to be understood but that he was trying to be friendly. His voice, however, was almost hoarse. The newcomer was a muscular youth about six feet tall. He had a face that looked handsome when he faced Burton but was comically craggy in profile. His eyes were green.

The subhuman jumped a little when he was addressed. He peered at the grinning youth from under the bars of bone. Then he smiled, revealing large thick teeth, and spoke in a language Burton did not recognize. He pointed to himself and said something that sounded like Kazzintuitruaabemss. Later, Burton would find out that it was his name and it meant Man-Who-Slew-The-Long-White-Tooth.

The others consisted of five men and four women.
Two of the men had known each other in Earthlife, and one of them had been married to one of the women. All were Italians or Slovenes who had died in Trieste, apparently about 1890, though he knew none of them.

"You there," Burton said, pointing to the man who had spoken in English. "Step forward. What is your name?"

The man approached him hesitantly. He said, "You’re English, right?"

The man spoke with an American Midwest flatness.

Burton held out his hand and said, "Yaas. Burton here."

The fellow raised hairless eyebrows and said, "Burton?" He leaned forward and peered at Burton’s face. "It’s hard to say…it couldn’t be…."

He straightened up. "Name’s Peter Frigate. F-R-I-G-A-T-E."

He looked around him and then said in a voice even more strained, "It’s hard to talk coherently. Everybody’s in such a state of shock, you know. I feel as if I’m coming apart. But…here we are…alive
again...young again...no hellfire...not yet, anyway. Born in 1918, died 2008...because of what this extra-Terrestrial did...don't hold it against him...only defending himself, you know.”

Frigate’s voice died away to a whisper. He grinned nervously at Monat.

Burton said, “You know this...Monat Grrautut?”

“Not exactly,” Frigate said. “I saw enough of him on TV, of course, and heard enough and read enough about him.”

He held out his hand as if he expected it to be rejected. Monat smiled, and they shook hands.

Frigate said, “I think it’d be a good idea if we banded together. We may need protection.”

“Why?” Burton said, though he knew well enough.

“You know how rotten most humans are,” Frigate said. “Once people get used to being resurrected, they’ll be fighting for women and food and anything that takes their fancy. And I think we ought to be buddies with this Neanderthal or whatever he is. Anyway, he’ll be a good man in a fight.”
Kazz, as he was named later on, seemed pathetically eager to be accepted. At the same time, he was suspicious of anyone who got too close.

A woman walked by then, muttering over and over in German, “My God! What have I done to offend Thee?”

A man, both fists clenched and raised to shoulder height, was shouting in Yiddish, “My beard! My beard!”

Another man was pointing at his genitals and saying in Slovenian, “They’ve made a Jew of me! A Jew! Do you think that…? No, it couldn’t be!”

Burton grinned savagely and said, “It doesn’t occur to him that maybe They have made a Mohammedan out of him or an Australian aborigine or an ancient Egyptian, all of whom practiced circumcision.”

“What did he say?” asked Frigate. Burton translated; Frigate laughed.

A woman hurried by; she was making a pathetic attempt to cover her breasts and pubic regions with her hands. She was muttering, “What will they think, what will they think?” And she disappeared behind the trees.
A man and a woman passed them; they were talking loudly in Italian as if they were separated by a broad highway.

“We can’t be in Heaven... I know, oh my God, I know!... There was Giuseppe Zomzini and you know what a wicked man he was... he ought to burn in hellfire! I know, I know... he stole from the treasury, he frequented whorehouses, he drank himself to death... yet... he’s here!... I know, I know....”

Another woman was running and screaming in German, “Daddy! Daddy! Where are you? It’s your own darling Hilda!”

A man scowled at them and said repeatedly, in Hungarian, “I’m as good as anyone and better than some. To hell with them.”

A woman said, “I wasted my whole life, my whole life. I did everything for them, and now....”

A man, swinging the metal cylinder before him as if it were a censer, called out, “Follow me to the mountains! Follow me! I know the truth, good people! Follow me! We’ll be safe in the bosom of the Lord! Don’t believe this illusion around you; follow me! I’ll open your eyes!”
Others spoke gibberish or were silent, their lips tight as if they feared to utter what was within them.

“‘It’ll take some time before they straighten out,’” Burton said. He felt that it would take a long time before the world became mundane for him, too.

“They may never know the truth,” Frigate said.

“What do you mean?”

“They didn’t know the Truth—capital T—on Earth, so why should they here? What makes you think we’re going to get a revelation?”

Burton shrugged and said, “I don’t. But I do think we ought to determine just what our environment is and how we can survive in it. The fortune of a man who sits, sits also.”

He pointed toward the riverbank. “See those stone mushrooms? They seem to be spaced out at intervals of a mile. I wonder what their purpose is?”

Monat said, “If you had taken a close look at that one, you would have seen that its surface contains about seven hundred round indentations. These are just the right size for the base of a cylinder to fit in. In fact,
there is a cylinder in the center of the top surface. I think that if we examine that cylinder we may be able to determine their purpose. I suspect that it was placed there so we’d do just that.”
A woman approached them. She was of medium height, had a superb shape, and a face that would have been beautiful if it had been framed by hair. Her eyes were large and dark. She made no attempt to cover herself with her hands. Burton was not the least bit aroused looking at her or any of the women. He was too deeply numbed.

The woman spoke in a well-modulated voice and an Oxford accent. "I beg your pardon, gentlemen. I couldn't help overhearing you. You're the only English voices I've heard since I woke up...here, wherever here is. I am an Englishwoman, and I am looking for protection. I throw myself on your mercy."

"Fortunately for you, madame," Burton said, "you come to the right men. At least, speaking for myself, I can assure you that you will get all the protection I can afford. Though, if I were like some of the English gentlemen I've known, you might not have fared so
well. By the way, this gentleman is not English. He’s Yankee.”

It seemed strange to be speaking so formally this day of all days, with all the wailing and shouting up and down the valley and everybody birth-naked and as hairless as eels.

The woman held out her hand to Burton. “I’m Mrs. Hargreaves,” she said.

Burton took the hand, and, bowing, kissed it lightly. He felt foolish, but, at the same time, the gesture strengthened his hold on sanity. If the forms of polite society could be preserved perhaps the “rightness” of things might also be restored.

“The late Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton,” he said, grinning slightly at the late. “Perhaps you’ve heard of me?”

She snatched her hand away and then extended it again.

“Yes, I’ve heard of you, Sir Richard.”

Somebody said, “It can’t be!”

Burton looked at Frigate, who had spoken in such a
low tone.

“And why not?” he said.

“Richard Burton!” Frigate said. “Yes. I wondered, but without any hair?....”

“Yaas?” Burton drawled.

“Yaas!” Frigate said. “Just as the books said!”

“What are you talking about?”

Frigate breathed in deeply and then said, “Never mind now, Mr. Burton. I’ll explain later. Just take it that I’m very shaken up. Not in my right mind. You understand that, of course.”

He looked intently at Mrs. Hargreaves, shook his head, and said, “Is your name Alice?”

“Why, yes!” she said, smiling and becoming beautiful, hair or no hair. “How did you know? Have I met you? No, I don’t think so.”

“Alice Pleasance Liddell Hargreaves?”

“Yes!”

“I have to go sit down,” the American said. He walked under the tree and sat down with his back to the trunk. His eyes looked a little glazed.
“Aftershock,” Burton said.

He could expect such erratic behavior and speech from the others for some time. He could expect a certain amount of nonrational behavior from himself, too. The important thing was to get shelter and food and some plan for common defense.

Burton spoke in Italian and Slovenian to the others and then made the introductions. They did not protest when he suggested that they should follow him down to the river’s edge.

“I’m sure we’re all thirsty,” he said. “And we should investigate that stone mushroom.”

They walked back to the plain behind them. The people were sitting on the grass or milling about. They passed one couple arguing loudly and red-facedly. Apparently, they had been husband and wife and were continuing a lifelong dispute. Suddenly, the man turned and walked away. The wife looked unbelievingly at him and then ran after him. He thrust her away so violently that she fell on the grass. He quickly lost himself in the crowd, but the woman wandered around, calling his name and threatening to make a scandal if he did not
come out of hiding.

Burton thought briefly of his own wife, Isabel. He had not seen her in this crowd, though that did not mean that she was not in it. But she would have been looking for him. She would not stop until she found him.

He pushed through the crowd to the river’s edge and then got down on his knees and scooped up water with his hands. It was cool and clear and refreshing. His stomach felt as if it were absolutely empty. After he had satisfied his thirst, he became hungry.


“I wish I could forget mine,” Frigate said.

Alice Hargreaves was kneeling by the edge and dipping water with one hand while she leaned on the other arm. Her figure was certainly lovely, Burton thought. He wondered if she would be blonde when her hair grew out, if it grew out. Perhaps Whoever had put them here intended they should all be bald, forever, for some reason of Theirs.

They climbed upon the top of the nearest mushroom
structure. The granite was a dense-grained gray flecked heavily with red. On its flat surface were seven hundred indentations, forming fifty concentric circles. The depression in the center held a metal cylinder. A little dark-skinned man with a big nose and receding chin was examining the cylinder. As they approached, he looked up and smiled.

“This one won’t open,” he said in German. “Perhaps it will later. I’m sure it’s there as an example of what to do with our own containers.”

He introduced himself as Lev Ruach and switched to a heavily accented English when Burton, Frigate, and Hargreaves gave their names.

“I was an atheist,” he said, seeming to speak to himself more than to them. “Now, I don’t know! This place is as big a shock to an atheist, you know, as to those devout believers who had pictured an afterlife quite different from this. Well, so I was wrong. It wouldn’t be the first time.”

He chuckled, and said to Monat, “I recognized you at once. It’s a good thing for you that you were resurrected in a group mainly consisting of people who
died in the nineteenth century. Otherwise, you’d be lynched.”

“Why is that?” Burton asked.

“He killed Earth,” Frigate said. “At least, I think he did.”

“The scanner,” Monat said dolefully, “was adjusted to kill only human beings. And it would not have exterminated all of mankind. It would have ceased operating after a predetermined number—unfortunately, a large number—had lost their lives. Believe me, my friends, I did not want to do that. You do not know what an agony it cost me to make the decision to press the button. But I had to protect my people. You forced my hand.”

“It started when Monat was on a live show,” Frigate said. “Monat made an unfortunate remark. He said that his scientists had the knowledge and ability to keep people from getting old. Theoretically, using Tau Cetan techniques, a man could live forever. But the knowledge was not used on his planet; it was forbidden. The interviewer asked him if these techniques could be applied to Terrestrials. Monat replied that there was no
reason why not. But rejuvenation was denied to his own kind for a very good reason, and this also applied to Terrestrials. By then, the government censor realized what was happening and cut off the audio. But it was too late.”

“Later,” Lev Ruach said, “the American government reported that Monat had misunderstood the question, that his knowledge of English had led him to make a misstatement. But it was too late. The people of America, and of the world, demanded that Monat reveal the secret of eternal youth.”

“Which I did not have,” said Monat. “Not a single one of our expedition had the knowledge. In fact, very few people on my planet had it. But it did no good to tell the people this. They thought I was lying. There was a riot, and a mob stormed the guards around our ship and broke into it. I saw my friends torn to pieces while they tried to reason with the mob. Reason!

“But I did what I did, not for revenge, but for a very different motive. I knew that, after we were killed, or even if we weren’t, the U.S. government would restore order. And it would have the ship in its possession. It
wouldn’t be long before Terrestrial scientists would know how to duplicate it. Inevitably, the Terrestrials would launch an invasion fleet against our world. So, to make sure that Earth would be set back many centuries, maybe thousands of years, knowing that I must do the dreadful thing to save my own world, I sent the signal to the scanner to orbit. I would not have had to do that if I could have gotten to the destruct-button and blown up the ship. But I could not get to the control room. So, I pressed the scanner-activation button. A short time later, the mob blew off the door of the room in which I had taken refuge. I remember nothing after that.”

Frigate said, “I was in a hospital in Western Samoa, dying of cancer, wondering if I would be buried next to Robert Louis Stevenson. Not much chance, I was thinking. Still, I had translated the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* into Samoan…Then, the news came. People all over the world were falling dead. The pattern of fatality was obvious. The Tau Cetan satellite was radiating something that dropped human beings in their tracks. The last I heard was that the U.S., England, Russia, China, France, and Israel were all sending up rockets to intercept it, blow it up. And the scanner was on a path
which would take it over Samoa within a few hours. The excitement must have been too much for me in my weakened condition. I became unconscious. That is all I remember.”

“The interceptors failed,” Ruach said. “The scanner blew them up before they even got close.”

Burton thought he had a lot to learn about post-1890, but now was not the time to talk about it. “I suggest we go up into the hills,” he said. “We should learn what type of vegetation grows there and if it can be useful. Also, if there is any flint we can work into weapons. This Old Stone Age fellow must be familiar with stone-working. He can show us how.”

They walked across the mile-broad plain and into the hills. On the way, several others joined their group. One was a little girl, about seven years old, with dark blue eyes and a beautiful face. She looked pathetically at Burton, who asked her in twelve languages if any of her parents or relatives were nearby. She replied in a language none of them knew. The linguists among them tried every tongue at their disposal, most of the European speeches and many of the African or Asiatic:
Hebrew, Hindustani, Arabic, a Berber dialect, Romany, Turkish, Persian, Latin, Greek, Pushtu.

Frigate, who knew a little Welsh and Gaelic, spoke to her. Her eyes widened, and then she frowned. The words seemed to have a certain familiarity or similarity to her speech, but they were not close enough to be intelligible.

“For all we know,” Frigate said, “she could be an ancient Gaul. She keeps using the word Gwenafra. Could that be her name?”

“We’ll teach her English,” Burton said. “And we’ll call her Gwenafra.” He picked up the child in his arms and started to walk with her. She burst into tears, but she made no effort to free herself. The weeping was a release from what must have been almost unbearable tension and a joy at finding a guardian. Burton bent his neck to place his face against her body. He did not want the others to see the tears in his eyes.

Where the plain met the hills, as if a line had been drawn, the short grass ceased and the thick, coarse espartolike grass, waist-high, began. Here, too, the towering pines, red pines and lodgepole pines, the
oaks, the yew, the gnarled giants with scarlet and green leaves, and the bamboo grew thickly. The bamboo consisted of many varieties, from slender stalks only a few feet high to plants over fifty feet high. Many of the trees were overgrown with the vines bearing huge green, red, yellow, and blue flowers.

“Bamboo is the material for spear shafts,” Burton said, “pipes for conducting water, containers, the basic stuff for building houses, furniture, boats, charcoal even for making gunpowder. And the young stalks of some may be good for eating. But we need stone for tools to cut down and shape the wood.”

They climbed over hills whose height increased as they neared the mountain. After they had walked about two miles as the crow flies, eight miles as the caterpillar crawls, they were stopped by the mountain. This rose in a sheer cliff face of some blueblack igneous rock on which grew huge patches of a blue-green lichen. There was no way of determining how high it was, but Burton did not think that he was wrong in estimating it as at least 20,000 feet high. As far as they could see up and down the valley, it presented a solid front.
“Have you noticed the complete absence of animal life?” Frigate said.

“Not even an insect.” Burton exclaimed. He strode to a pile of broken rock and picked up a fist-sized chunk of greenish stone. “Chert,” he said. “If there’s enough, we can make knives, spearheads, adzes, axes. And with them build houses, boats, and many other things.”

“Tools and weapons must be bound to wooden shafts,” Frigate said. “What do we use as binding material?”

“Perhaps human skin,” Burton said.

The others looked shocked. Burton gave a strange chirruping laugh, incongruous in so masculine-looking a man. He said, “If we’re forced to kill in self-defense or lucky enough to stumble over a corpse some assassin has been kind enough to prepare for us, we’d be fools not to use what we need. However, if any of you feel self-sacrificing enough to offer your own epidermises for the good of the group, step forward! We’ll remember you in our wills.”

“Surely, you’re joking,” Alice Hargreaves said. “I
can't say I particularly care for such talk.”

Frigate said, “Hang around him, and you’ll hear lots worse,” but he did not explain what he meant.
Burton examined the rock along the base of the mountain. The blue-black, densely grained stone of the mountain itself was some kind of basalt. But there were pieces of chert scattered on the surface of the earth or sticking out of the surface at the base. These looked as if they might have fallen down from a projection above, so it was possible that the mountain was not a solid mass of basalt. Using a piece of chert which had a thin edge, he scraped away a patch of the lichenous growth. The stone beneath it seemed to be a greenish dolomite. Apparently, the pieces of chert had come from the dolomite, though there was no evidence of decay or fracture of the vein.

The lichen could be *Parmelia saxitilis*, which also grew on old bones, including skulls, and hence, according to The Doctrine of Signatures, was a cure for epilepsy and a healing salve for wounds.

Hearing stone banging away on stone, he returned to
the group. All were standing around the subhuman and the American, who were squatting back to back and working on the chert. Both had knocked out rough hand axes. While the others watched, they produced six more. Then each took a large chert nodule and broke it into two with a hammerstone. Using one piece of the nodule, they began to knock long thin flakes from the outside rim of the nodule. They rotated the nodule and banged away until each had about a dozen blades.

They continued to work, one a type of man who had lived a hundred thousand years or more before Christ, the other the refined end of human evolution, a product of the highest civilization (technologically speaking) of Earth, and, indeed, one of the last men on Earth—if he was to be believed.

Suddenly, Frigate howled, jumped up, and hopped around holding his left thumb. One of his strokes had missed its target. Kazz grinned, exposing huge teeth like tombstones. He got up, too, and walked into the grass with his curious rolling gait. He returned a few minutes later with six bamboo sticks with sharpened ends and several with straight ends. He sat down and worked on one stick until he had split the end and inserted the
triangular chipped-down point of an axe head into the split end. This he bound with some long grasses.

Within half an hour, the group was armed with hand axes, axes with bamboo hafts, daggers, and spears with wooden points and with stone tips.

By then Frigate’s hand had quit hurting so much and the bleeding had stopped. Burton asked him how he happened to be so proficient in stone-working.

“I was an amateur anthropologist,” he said. “A lot of people—a lot relatively speaking—learned how to make tools and weapons from stone as a hobby. Some of us got pretty good at it, though I don’t think any modern ever got as skillful and as swift as a Neolithic specialist. Those guys did it all their lives, you know.

“Also, I just happen to know a lot about working bamboo, too, so I can be of some value to you.”

They began walking back to the river. They paused a moment on top of a tall hill. The sun was almost directly overhead. They could see for many miles along the river and also across the river. Although they were too far away to make out any figures on the other side of the mile-wide stream, they could see the mushroom-shaped
structures there. The terrain on the other side was the same as that on theirs. A mile-wide plain, perhaps two and a half miles of foothills covered with trees. Beyond, the straight-up face of an insurmountable black and bluish-green mountain.

North and south, the valley ran straight for about ten miles. Then it curved, and the river was lost to sight.

"Sunrise must come late and sunset early," Burton said. "Well, we must make the most of the bright hours."

At that moment, everybody jumped and many cried out. A blue flame arose from the top of each stone structure, soared up at least twenty feet, then disappeared. A few seconds later, a sound of distant thunder passed them. The boom struck the mountain behind them and echoed.

Burton scooped up the little girl in his arms and began to trot down the hill. Though they maintained a good pace, they were forced to walk from time to time to regain their breaths. Nevertheless, Burton felt wonderful. It had been so many years since he could use his muscles so profligately that he did not want to
stop enjoying the sensation. He could scarcely believe that, only a short time ago, his right foot had been swollen with gout, and his heart had beaten wildly if he climbed a few steps.

They came to the plain and continued trotting, for they could see that there was much excitement around one of the structures. Burton swore at those in his way and pushed them aside. He got black looks but no one tried to push back. Abruptly, he was in the space cleared around the base. And he saw what had attracted them. He also smelled it.

Frigate, behind him, said, “Oh, my God!” and tried to retch on his empty stomach.

Burton had seen too much in his lifetime to be easily affected by grisly sights. Moreover, he could take himself to one remove from reality when things became too grim or too painful. Sometimes he made the move, the sidestepping of things-as-they-were, with an effort of will. Usually, it occurred automatically. In this case, the displacement was done automatically.

The corpse lay on its side and half under the edge of the mushroom top. Its skin was completely burned off,
and the naked muscles were charred. The nose and ears, fingers, toes, and the genitals had been burned away or were only shapeless stubs.

Near it, on her knees, was a woman mumbling a prayer in Italian. She had huge black eyes which would have been beautiful if they had not been reddened and puffy with tears. She had a magnificent figure which would have caught all his attention under different circumstances.

“What happened?” he said.

The woman stopped praying and looked at him. She got to her feet and whispered, “Father Giuseppe was leaning against the rock; he said he was hungry. He said he didn’t see much sense in being brought back to life only to starve to death. I said that we wouldn’t die, how could we? We’d been raised from the dead, and we’d be provided for. He said maybe we were in hell. We’d go hungry and naked forever. I told him not to blaspheme, of all people he should be the last to blaspheme. But he said that this was not what he’d been telling everybody for forty years would happen and then...and then....”
Burton waited a few seconds, and then said, “And then?”

“Father Giuseppe said that at least there wasn’t any hellfire, but that that would be better than starving for eternity. And then the flames reached out and wrapped him inside them, and there was a noise like a bomb exploding, and then he was dead, burned to death. It was horrible, horrible.”

Burton moved north of the corpse to get the wind behind him, but even here the stench was sickening. It was not the odor as much as the idea of death that upset him. The first day of the Resurrection was only half over and a man was dead. Did this mean that the resurrected were just as vulnerable to death as in Earthlife? If so, what sense was there to it?

Frigate had quit trying to heave on an empty stomach. Pale and shaking, he got to his feet and approached Burton. He kept his back turned to the dead man.

“Hadn’t we better get rid of that?” he said, jerking his thumb over his shoulder.

“I suppose so,” Burton said coolly. “It’s too bad his
skin is ruined, though.”

He grinned at the American. Frigate looked even more shocked.

“Here,” Burton said. “Grab hold of his feet, I’ll take the other end. We’ll toss him into the river.”

“The river?” Frigate said.

“Yaas. Unless you want to carry him into the hills and chop out a hole for him there.”

“I can’t,” Frigate said, and walked away. Burton looked disgustedly after him and then signaled to the subhuman. Kazz grunted and shuffled forward to the body with that peculiar walking-on-the-side-of-his-feet gait. He stooped over and, before Burton could get hold of the blackened stumps of the feet, Kazz had lifted the body above his head, walked a few steps to the edge of the river, and tossed the corpse into the water. It sank immediately and was moved by the current along the shore. Kazz decided that this was not good enough. He waded out after it up to his waist and stooped down, submerging himself for a minute. Evidently he was shoving the body out into the deeper part.
Alice Hargreaves had watched with horror. Now she said, “But that’s the water we’ll be drinking!”

“The river looks big enough to purify itself,” Burton said. “At any rate, we have more things to worry about than proper sanitation procedures.”

Burton turned when Monat touched his shoulder and said, “Look at that!” The water was boiling about where the body should be. Abruptly, a silvery white-finned back broke the surface.

“It looks as if your worry about the water being contaminated is in vain,” Burton said to Alice Hargreaves. “The river has scavengers. I wonder…I wonder if it’s safe to swim.”

At least, the subhuman had gotten out without being attacked. He was standing before Burton, brushing the water off his hairless body, and grinning with those huge teeth. He was frighteningly ugly. But he had the knowledge of a primitive man, knowledge which had already been handy in a world of primitive conditions. And he would be a damned good man to have at your back in a fight. Short though he was, he was immensely powerful. Those heavy bones afforded a broad base for
heavy muscles. It was evident that he had, for some reason, become attached to Burton. Burton liked to think the savage, with a savage’s instincts, “knew” that Burton was the man to follow if he would survive. Moreover, a subhuman or prehuman, being closer to the animals, would also be more psychic. So he would detect Burton’s own well-developed psychic powers and would feel an affinity to Burton, even though he was *Homo sapiens*.

Then Burton reminded himself that his reputation for psychism had been built up by himself and that he was half-charlatan. He had talked about his powers so much, and had listened to his wife so much, that he had come to believe in them himself. But there were moments when he remembered that his “powers” were at least half-fake.

Nevertheless, he was a capable hypnotist, and he did believe that his eyes radiated a peculiar extrasensory power, when he wished them to do so. It may have been this that attracted the half-man.

“The rock discharged a tremendous energy,” Lev Ruach said. “It must have been electrical. But why? I
can’t believe that the discharge was purposeless.”

Burton looked across the mushroom shape of the rock. The gray cylinder in the center depression seemed to be undamaged by the discharge. He touched the stone. It was no warmer than might have been expected from its exposure to the sun.

Lev Ruach said, “Don’t touch it! There might be another….” and he stopped when he saw his warning was too late.

“Another discharge?” Burton said. “I don’t think so. Not for some time yet, anyway. That cylinder was left here so we could learn something from it.”

He put his hands on the top of the mushroom structure and jumped forward. He came up and onto the top with an ease that gladdened him. It had been so many years since he had felt so young and so powerful. Or so hungry.

A few in the crowd cried out to him to get down off the rock before the blue flames came again. Others looked as if they hoped that another discharge would occur. The majority were content to let him take the risks.
Nothing happened, although he had not been too sure he would not be incinerated. The stone felt only pleasantly warm on his bare feet.

He walked over the depressions to the cylinder and put his fingers under the rim of the cover. It rose easily. His heart beating with excitement, he looked inside it. He had expected the miracle, and there it was. The racks within held six containers, each of which was full.

He signaled to his group to come up. Kazz vaulted up easily. Frigate, who had recovered from his sickness, got onto the top with an athlete’s ease. If the fellow did not have such a queasy stomach, he might be an asset, Burton thought. Frigate turned and pulled up Alice, who came over the edge at the ends of his hands.

When they crowded around him, their heads bent over the interior of the cylinder, Burton said, “It’s a veritable grail! Look! Steak, a thick juicy steak! Bread and butter! Jam! Salad! And what’s that? A package of cigarettes? Yaas! And a cigar! And a cup of bourbon, very good stuff by its odor! Something...what is it?”

“Looks like sticks of gum,” Frigate said. “Unwrapped. And that must be a...what? A lighter for
“Food!” a man shouted. He was a large man, not a member of what Burton thought of as “his group.” He had followed them, and others were scrambling up on the rock. Burton reached down past the containers into the cylinder and gripped the small silvery rectangular object on the bottom. Frigate had said this might be a lighter. Burton did not know what a “lighter” was, but he suspected that it provided flame for the cigarettes. He kept the object in the palm of his hand and with the other he closed the lid. His mouth was watering, and his belly was rumbling. The others were just as eager as he; their expressions showed that they could not understand why he was not removing the food.

The large man said, in a loud blustery Triestan Italian, “I’m hungry, and I’ll kill anybody who tries to stop me! Open that!”

The others said nothing, but it was evident that they expected Burton to take the lead in the defense. Instead, he said, “Open it yourself,” and turned away. The others hesitated. They had seen and smelled the food. Kazz was drooling. But Burton said, “Look at
that mob. There’ll be a fight here in a minute. I say, let them fight over their morsels. Not that I’m avoiding a battle, you understand,” he added, looking fiercely at them. “But I’m certain that we’ll all have our own cylinders full of food by supper time. These cylinders, call them grails, if you please, just need to be left on the rock to be filled. That is obvious, that’s why this grail was placed here.”

He walked to the edge of the stone near the water and got off. By then the top was jammed with people and more were trying to get on. The large man had seized a steak and bitten into it, but someone had tried to snatch it away from him. He yelled with fury and, suddenly, rammed through those between him and the river. He went over the edge and into the water, emerging a moment later. In the meantime, men and women were screaming and striking each other over the rest of the food and goods in the cylinder.

The man who had jumped into the river floated off on his back while he ate the rest of the steak. Burton watched him closely, half-expecting him to be seized by fish. But he drifted on down the stream, undisturbed.
The rocks to the north and south, on both sides of the river, were crowded with struggling humans.

Burton walked until he was free of the crowd and sat down. His group squatted by him or stood up and watched the writhing and noisy mass. The grailstone looked like a toadstool engulfed in pale maggots. Very noisy maggots. Some of them were now also red, because blood had been spilled.

The most depressing aspect of the scene was the reaction of the children. The young ones had stayed back from the rock, but they knew that there was food in the grail. They were crying from hunger and from terror caused by the screaming and fighting of the adults on the stone. The little girl with Burton was dry-eyed, but she was shaking. She stood by Burton and put her arms around his neck. He patted her on the back and murmured encouraging words which she could not understand but the tone of which helped to quiet her.

The sun was on its descent. Within about two hours it would be hidden by the towering western mountain, though a genuine dusk presumably would not happen for many hours. There was no way to determine how
long the day was here. The temperature had gone up, but sitting in the sun was not by any means unbearable, and the steady breeze helped cool them off.

Kazz made signs indicating that he would like a fire and also pointed at the tip of a bamboo spear. No doubt he wanted to fire-harden the tip.

Burton had inspected the metal object taken from the grail. It was of a hard silvery metal, rectangular, flat, about two inches long and three-tenths across. It had a small hole in one end and a slide on the other. Burton put his thumbnail against the projection at the end of the slide and pushed. The slide moved downward about two-sixteenths of an inch, and a wire about one-tenth of an inch in diameter and a half-inch long slid out of the hole in the end. Even in the bright sunlight, it glowed whitely. He touched the tip of the wire to a blade of grass; the blade shriveled up at once. Applied to the tip of the bamboo spear, it burned a tiny hole. Burton pushed the slide back into its original position, and the wire withdrew, like the hot head of a brazen turtle, into the silvery shell.

Both Frigate and Ruach wondered aloud at the
power contained in the tiny pack. To make the wire that hot required much voltage. How many charges would the battery or the radioactive pile that must be in it give? How could the lighter's power pack be renewed?

There were many questions that could not be immediately answered or, perhaps, never. The greatest was how they could have been brought back to life in rejuvenated bodies. Whoever had done it possessed a science that was godlike. But speculation about it, though it would give them something to talk about, would solve nothing.

After a while, the crowd dispersed. The cylinder was left on its side on top of the grailstone. Several bodies were sprawled there, and a number of men and women who got off the rock were hurt. Burton went through the crowd. One woman's face had been clawed, especially around her right eye. She was sobbing with no one to pay attention to her. Another man was sitting on the ground and holding his groin, which had been raked with sharp fingernails.

Of the four lying on top of the stone, three were unconscious. These recovered with water dashed into
their faces from the grail. The fourth, a short slender man, was dead. Someone had twisted his head until his neck had broken.

Burton looked up at the sun again and said, “I don’t know exactly when supper time will occur. I suggest we return not too long after the sun goes down behind the mountain. We will set our grails, or glory buckets, or lunch pails, or whatever you wish to call them, in these depressions. And then we’ll wait. In the meantime....”

He could have tossed this body into the river, too, but he had now thought of a use, perhaps uses, for it. He told the others what he wanted, and they got the corpse down off the stone and started to carry it across the plain. Frigate and Galeazzi, a former importer of Trieste, took the first turn. Frigate had evidently not cared for the job, but when Burton asked him if he would, he nodded. He picked up the man’s feet and led with Galeazzi holding the dead man under the armpits. Alice walked behind Burton with the child’s hand in hers. Some in the crowd looked curiously or called out comments or questions, but Burton ignored them. After half a mile, Kazz and Monat took over the corpse. The child did not seem to be disturbed by the dead man.
She had been curious about the first corpse, instead of being horrified by its burned appearance.

"If she really is an ancient Gaul," Frigate said, "she may be used to seeing charred bodies. If I remember correctly, the Gauls burned sacrifices alive in big wicker baskets at religious ceremonies. I don’t remember what god or goddess the ceremonies were in honor of. I wish I had a library to refer to. Do you think we’ll ever have one here? I think I would go nuts if I didn’t have books to read."

"That remains to be seen," Burton said. "If we’re not provided with a library, we’ll make our own. If it’s possible to do so."

He thought that Frigate’s question was a silly one, but then not everybody was quite in their right minds at this time.

At the foothills, two men, Rocco and Brontich, succeeded Kazz and Monat. Burton led them past the trees through the waist-high grass. The saw-edged grass scraped their legs. Burton cut off a stalk with his knife and tested the stalk for toughness and flexibility. Frigate kept close to his elbow and seemed unable to
stop chattering. Probably, Burton thought, he talked to keep from thinking about the two deaths.

“...If everyone who has ever lived has been resurrected here, think of the research to be done! Think of the historical mysteries and questions you could clear up! You could talk to John Wilkes Booth and find out if Secretary of War Stanton really was behind the Lincoln assassination. You might ferret out the identity of Jack the Ripper. Find out if Joan of Arc actually did belong to a witch cult. Talk to Napoleon’s Marshal Ney; see if he did escape the firing squad and become a schoolteacher in America. Get the true story on Pearl Harbor. See the face of the Man in the Iron Mask, if there ever was such a person. Interview Lucrezia Borgia and those who knew her and determine if she was the poisoning bitch most people think she was. Learn the identity of the assassin of the two little princes in the Tower. Maybe Richard III did kill them.

“And you, Richard Francis Burton, there are many questions about your own life that your biographers would like to have answered. Did you really have a Persian love you were going to marry and for whom you were going to renounce your true identity and
become a native? Did she die before you could marry her, and did her death really embitter you, and did you carry a torch for her the rest of your life?”

Burton glared at him. He had just met the man and here he was, asking the most personal and prying questions. Nothing excused this.

Frigate backed away, saying, “And…and…and…well, it’ll all have to wait, I can see that. But did you know that your wife had extreme unction administered to you shortly after you died and that you were buried in a Catholic cemetery—you, the infidel?”

Lev Ruach, whose eyes had been widening while Frigate was rattling on, said, “You’re Burton, the explorer and linguist? The discoverer of Lake Tanganyika? The one who made a pilgrimage to Mecca while disguised as a Moslem? The translator of *The Thousand and One Nights*?”

“I have no desire to lie nor need to. I am he.”

Lev Ruach spat at Burton, but the wind carried it away. “You son of a bitch!” he cried. “You foul Nazi bastard! I read about you! You were, in many ways, an admirable person, I suppose! But you were an anti-
Semite!"
Burton was startled. He said, “My enemies spread that baseless and vicious rumor. But anybody acquainted with the facts and with me would know better. And now, I think you’d…..”


“I did,” Burton replied. His face was red, and when he looked down, he saw that his body was also flushed. “And now, as I started to say before you so boorishly interrupted me, I think you had better go. Ordinarily, I would be at your throat by now. A man who talks to me like that has to defend his words with deeds. But this is a strange situation, and perhaps you are overwrought. I do not know. But if you do not apologize now, or walk off, I am going to make another corpse.”

Ruach clenched his fists and glared at Burton; then he spun around and stalked off.
“What is a Nazi?” Burton said to Frigate.

The American explained as best he could. Burton said, “I have much to learn about what happened after I died. That man is mistaken about me. I’m no Nazi. England, you say, became a second-class power? Only fifty years after my death? I find that difficult to believe.”

“Why would I lie to you?” Frigate said. “Don’t feel bad about it. Before the end of the twentieth century, she had risen again, and in a most curious way, though it was too late....”

Listening to the Yankee, Burton felt pride for his country. Although England had treated him more than shabbily during his lifetime, and although he had always wanted to get out of the island whenever he had been on it, he would defend it to the death. And he had been devoted to the Queen.

Abruptly, he said, “If you guessed my identity, why didn’t you say something about it?”

“I wanted to be sure. Besides, we’ve not had much time for social intercourse,” Frigate said. “Or any other kind, either,” he added, looking sidewise at Alice Hargreaves’ magnificent figure.
“I know about her, too,” he said, “if she’s the woman I think she is.”

“That’s more than I do,” Burton replied. He stopped. They had gone up the slope of the first hill and were on its top. They lowered the body to the ground beneath a giant red pine.

Immediately, Kazz, chert knife in his hand, squatted down by the corpse. He raised his head upward and uttered a few phrases in what must have been a religious chant. Then, before the others could object, he had cut into the body and removed the liver.

Most of the group cried out in horror. Burton grunted. Monat stared.

Kazz’s big teeth bit into the bloody organ and tore off a large chunk. His massively muscled and thickly boned jaws began chewing, and he half-closed his eyes in ecstasy. Burton stepped up to him and held out his hand, intending to remonstrate. Kazz grinned broadly and cut off a piece and offered it to Burton. He was very surprised at Burton’s refusal.

“A cannibal!” Alice Hargreaves said. “Oh, my God, a bloody, stinking cannibal! And this is the promised
“He’s no worse than our own ancestors,” Burton said. He had recovered from the shock, and was even enjoying—a little—the reaction of the others. “In a land where there seems to be precious little food, his action is eminently practical. Well, our problem of burying a corpse without proper digging tools is solved. Furthermore, if we’re wrong about the grails being a source of food, we may be emulating Kazz before long!”

“Never!” Alice said. “I’d die first!”

“That is exactly what you would do,” Burton replied, coolly. “I suggest we retire and leave him to his meal. It doesn’t do anything for my own appetite, and I find his table manners as abominable as those of a Yankee frontiersman’s. Or a country prelate’s,” he added for Alice’s benefit.

They walked out of sight of Kazz and behind one of the great gnarled trees. Alice said, “I don’t want him around. He’s an animal, an abomination! Why, I wouldn’t feel safe for a second with him around!”

“You asked me for protection,” Burton said. “I’ll
give it to you as long as you are a member of this party. But you’ll also have to accept my decisions. One of which is that the apeman remains with us. We need his strength and his skills, which seem to be very appropriate for this type of country. We’ve become primitives; therefore, we can learn from a primitive. He stays.”

Alice looked at the others with silent appeal. Monat twitched his eyebrows. Frigate shrugged his shoulders and said, “Mrs. Hargreaves, if you can possibly do it, forget your mores, your conventions. We’re not in a proper upper-class Victorian heaven. Or, indeed, in any sort of heaven ever dreamed of. You can’t think and behave as you did on Earth. For one thing, you come from a society where women covered themselves from neck to foot in heavy garments, and the sight of a woman’s knee was a stirring sexual event. Yet, you seem to suffer no embarrassment because you’re nude. You are as poised and dignified as if you wore a nun’s habit.”

Alice said, “I don’t like it. But why should I be embarrassed? Where all are nude, none are nude. It’s the thing to do, in fact, the only thing that can be done.
If some angel were to give me a complete outfit, I wouldn't wear it. I'd be out of style. And my figure is good. If it weren't I might be suffering more.”

The two men laughed, and Frigate said, “You’re fabulous, Alice. Absolutely. I may call you Alice? Mrs. Hargreaves seems so formal when you’re nude.”

She did not reply but walked away and disappeared behind a large tree. Burton said, “Something will have to be done about sanitation in the near future. Which means that somebody will have to decide the health policies and have the power to make regulations and enforce them. How does one form legislative, judicial, and executive bodies from the present state of anarchy?”

“To get to more immediate problems,” Frigate said, “what do we do about the dead man?”

He was only a little less pale than a moment ago when Kazz had made his incisions with his chert knife.

Burton said, “I’m sure that human skin, properly tanned, or human gut, properly treated, will be far superior to grass for making ropes or bindings. I intend to cut off some strips. Do you want to help me?”
Only the wind rustling the leaves and the tops of the grass broke the silence. The sun beat down and brought out sweat which dried rapidly in the wind. No bird cried, no insect buzzed. And then the shrill voice of the little girl shattered the quiet. Alice’s voice answered her, and the little girl ran to her behind the tree.

“I’ll try,” the American said. “But I don’t know. I’ve gone through more than enough for one day.”

“You do as you please then,” Burton said. “But anybody who helps me gets first call on the use of the skin. You may wish you could have some in order to bind an axe head to a haft.”

Frigate gulped audibly and then said, “I’ll come.”

Kazz was still squatting in the grass by the body, holding the bloody liver with one hand and the bloody stone knife with the other. Seeing Burton, he grinned with stained lips and cut off a piece of liver. Burton shook his head. The others, Galeazzi, Brontich, Maria Tucci, Filipo Rocco, Rosa Nalini, Caterina Capone, Fiorenza Fiorri, Babich, and Giunta, had retreated from the grisly scene. They were on the other side of a thicktrunked pine and talking subduedly in Italian.
Burton squatted down by the body and applied the point of the knife, beginning just above the right knee and continuing to the collarbone. Frigate stood by him and stared. He became even more pale, and his trembling increased. But he stood firm until two long strips had been lifted from the body.

“Care to try your hand at it?” Burton said. He rolled the body over on its side so that other, even longer, strips could be taken. Frigate took the bloody-tipped knife and set to work, his teeth gritted.

“Not so deep,” Burton said and, a moment later, “Now you’re not cutting deeply enough. Here, give me the knife. Watch!”

“I had a neighbor who used to hang up his rabbits behind his garage and cut their throats right after breaking their necks,” Frigate said. “I watched once. That was enough.”

“You can’t afford to be fastidious or weak-stomached,” Burton said. “You’re living in the most primitive of conditions. You have to be a primitive to survive, like it or not.”

Brontich, the tall skinny Slovene who had once been
an innkeeper, ran up to them. He said, “We just found another of those big mushroom-shaped stones. About forty yards from here. It was hidden behind some trees down in a hollow.”

Burton’s first delight in hectoring Frigate had passed. He was beginning to feel sorry for the fellow. He said, “Look, Peter, why don’t you go investigate the stone? If there is one here, we can save ourselves a trip back to the river.”

He handed Frigate his grail. “Put this in a hole on the stone, but remember exactly which hole you put it in. Have the others do that, too. Make sure that they know where they put their own grails. Wouldn’t want to have any quarrels about that, you know.”

Strangely, Frigate was reluctant to go. He seemed to feel that he had disgraced himself by his weakness. He stood there for a moment, shifting his weight from one leg to another and sighing several times. Then, as Burton continued to scrape away at the underside of the skinstrips, he walked away. He carried the two grails in one hand and his stone axe head in the other.

Burton stopped working after the American was out
of sight. He had been interested in finding out how to cut off strips, and he might dissect the body’s trunk to remove the entrails. But he could do nothing at this time about preserving the skin or guts. It was possible that the bark of the oaklike trees might contain tannin which could be used with other materials to convert human skin into leather. By the time that was done, however, these strips would have rotted. Still, he had not wasted his time. The efficiency of the stone knives was proven, and he had reinforced his weak memory of human anatomy. When they were juveniles in Pisa, Richard Burton and his brother Edward had associated with the Italian medical students of the university. Both of the Burton youths had learned much from the students and neither had abandoned their interest in anatomy. Edward became a surgeon, and Richard had attended a number of lectures and public and private dissections in London. But he had forgotten much of what he had learned.

Abruptly, the sun went past the shoulder of the mountain. A pale shadow fell over him, and, within a few minutes, the entire valley was in the dusk. But the sky was a bright blue for a long time. The breeze
continued to flow at the same rate. The moisture-laden air became a little cooler. Burton and the Neanderthal left the body and followed the sounds of the others’ voices. These were by the grailstone of which Brontich had spoken. Burton wondered if there were others near the base of the mountain, strung out at approximate distances of a mile. This one lacked the grail in the center depression, however. Perhaps this meant that it was not ready to operate. He did not think so. It could be assumed that Whoever had made the grailstones had placed the grails in the center holes of those on the river’s edge because the resurrectees would be using these first. By the time they found the inland stones, they would know how to use them.

The grails were set on the depressions of the outmost circle. Their owners stood or sat around, talking but with their minds on the grails. All were wondering when—or perhaps if—the next blue flames would come. Much of their conversation was about how hungry they were. The rest was mainly surmise about how they had come here, Who had put them here, where They were, and what was being planned for them. A few spoke of their lives on Earth.
Burton sat down beneath the wide-flung and densely leaved branches of the gnarled black-trunked “irontree.” He felt tired, as all, except Kazz, obviously did. His empty belly and his stretched-out nerves kept him from dozing off, although the quiet voices and the rustle of leaves conduced to sleep. The hollow in which the group waited was formed by a level space at the junction of four hills and was surrounded by trees. Though it was darker than on top of the hills, it also seemed to be a little warmer. After a while, as the dusk and the chill increased, Burton organized a firewood-collecting party. Using the knives and hand axes, they cut down many mature bamboo plants and gathered piles of grass. With the white-hot wire of the lighter, Burton started a fire of leaves and grass. These were green, and so the fire was smoky and unsatisfactory until the bamboo was put on.

Suddenly, an explosion made them jump. Some of the women screamed. They had forgotten about watching the grailstone. Burton turned just in time to see the blue flames soar up about twenty feet. The heat from the discharge could be felt by Brontich, who was about twenty feet from it.
Then the noise was gone, and they stared at the grails. Burton was the first upon the stone again; most of them did not care to venture on the stone too soon after the flames. He lifted the lid of his grail, looked within, and whooped with delight. The others climbed up and opened their own grails. Within a minute, they were seated near the fire eating rapidly, exclaiming with ecstasy, pointing out to each other what they’d found, laughing, and joking. Things were not so bad after all. Whoever was responsible for this was taking care of them.

There was food in plenty, even after fasting all day, or, as Frigate put it, “probably fasting for half of eternity.” He meant by this, as he explained to Monat, that there was no telling how much time had elapsed between A.D. 2008 and today. This world wasn’t built in a day, and preparing humanity for resurrection would take more than seven days. That is, if all of this had been brought about by scientific means, not by supernatural.

Burton’s grail had yielded a four-inch cube of steak; a small ball of dark bread; butter; potatoes and gravy;
lettuce with salad dressing of an unfamiliar but delicious taste. In addition, there was a five-ounce cup containing an excellent bourbon and another small cup with four ice cubes in it.

There was more, all the better because unexpected. A small briar pipe. A sack of pipe tobacco. Three panatela-shaped cigars. A plastic package with ten cigarettes.

“Unfiltered!” Frigate said.

There was also one small brown cigarette which Burton and Frigate smelled and said, at the same time, “Marijuana!”

Alice, holding up a small metallic scissors and a black comb, said, “Evidently we’re going to get our hair back. Otherwise, there’d be no need for these. I’m so glad! But do...They...really expect me to use this?”

She held out a tube of bright red lipstick.

“Or me?” Frigate said, also looking at a similar tube.

“They’re eminently practical,” Monat said, turning over a packet of what was obviously toilet paper. Then he pulled out a sphere of green soap.
Burton’s steak was very tender, although he would have preferred it rare. On the other hand, Frigate complained because it was not cooked enough.

“Evidently, these grails do not contain menus tailored for the individual owner,” Frigate said. “Which may be why we men also get lipstick and the women got pipes. It’s a mass production.”

“Two miracles in one day,” Burton said. “That is, if they are such. I prefer a rational explanation and intend to get it. I don’t think anyone can, as yet, tell me how we were resurrected. But perhaps you twentieth-centurians have a reasonable theory for the seemingly magical appearance of these articles in a previously empty container?”

“If you compare the exterior and interior of the grail,” Monat said, “you will observe an approximate five-centimeter difference in depth. The false bottom must conceal a molar circuitry which is able to convert energy to matter. The energy, obviously, comes during the discharge from the rocks. In addition to the e-m converter, the grail must hold molar templates…? molds…? which form the matter into various
combinations of elements and compounds.

"I'm safe in my speculations, for we had a similar converter on my native planet. But nothing as miniature as this, I assure you."

"Same on Earth," Frigate said. "They were making iron out of pure energy before A.D. 2002, but it was a very cumbersome and expensive process with an almost microscopic yield."

"Good," Burton said. "All this has cost us nothing. So far...."

He fell silent for a while, thinking of the dream he had when awakening.

"Pay up," God had said. "You owe for the flesh."

What had that meant? On Earth, at Trieste, in 1890, he had been dying in his wife's arms and asking for... what? Chloroform? Something. He could not remember. Then, oblivion. And he had awakened in that nightmare place and had seen things that were not on Earth nor, as far as he knew, on this planet. But that experience had been no dream.
They finished eating and replaced the containers in the racks within the grails. Since there was no water nearby, they would have to wait until morning to wash the containers. Frigate and Kazz, however, had made several buckets out of sections of the giant bamboo. The American volunteered to walk back to the river, if some of them would go with him, and fill the sections with water. Burton wondered why the fellow volunteered. Then, looking at Alice, he knew why. Frigate must be hoping to find some congenial female companionship. Evidently he took it for granted that Alice Hargreaves preferred Burton. And the other women, Tucci, Malini, Capone, and Fiorri, had made their choices of, respectively, Galleazzi, Brontich, Rocco, and Giunta. Babich had wandered off, possibly for the same reason that Frigate had for wishing to leave.

Monat and Kazz went with Frigate. The sky was suddenly crowded with gigantic sparks and great
luminous gas clouds. The glitter of jampacked stars, some so large they seemed to be broken-off pieces of Earth’s moon, and the shine of the clouds, awed them and made them feel pitifully microscopic and ill-made.

Burton lay on his back on a pile of tree leaves and puffed on a cigar. It was excellent, and in the London of his day would have cost at least a shilling. He did not feel so minute and unworthy now. The stars were inanimate matter, and he was alive. No star could ever know the delicious taste of an expensive cigar. Nor could it know the ecstasy of holding a warm well-curved woman next to it.

On the other side of the fire, half or wholly lost in the grasses and the shadows, were the Triestans. The liquor had uninhibited them, though part of their sense of freedom may have come from joy at being alive and young again. They giggled and laughed and rolled back and forth in the grass and made loud noises while kissing. And then, couple by couple, they retreated into the darkness. Or at least, made no more loud noises.

The little girl had fallen asleep by Alice. The firelight flickered over Alice’s handsome aristocratic face and
bald head and on the magnificent body and long legs. Burton suddenly knew that all of him had been resurrected. He definitely was not the old man who, during the last sixteen years of his life, had paid so heavily for the many fevers and sicknesses that had squeezed him dry in the tropics. Now he was young again, healthy, and possessed by the old clamoring demon.

Yet he had given his promise to protect her. He could make no move, say no word which she could interpret as seductive.

Well, she was not the only woman in the world. As a matter of fact, he had the whole world of women, if not at his disposal, at least available to be asked. That is, he did if everybody who had died on Earth was on this planet. She would be only one among many billions (possibly thirty-six billion, if Frigate’s estimate was correct). But there was, of course, no such evidence that this was the case.

The hell of it was that Alice might as well be the only one in the world, at this moment, anyway. He could not get up and walk off into the darkness looking for
another woman, because that would leave her and the child unprotected. She certainly would not feel safe with Monat and Kazz, nor could he blame her. They were so terrifyingly ugly. Nor could he entrust her to Frigate—if Frigate returned tonight, which Burton doubted—because the fellow was an unknown quantity.

Burton suddenly laughed loudly at his situation. He had decided that he might as well stick it out for tonight. This thought set him laughing again, and he did not stop until Alice asked him if he was all right.

"More right than you will ever know," he said, turning his back to her. He reached into his grail and extracted the last item. This was a small flat stick of chicle-like substance. Frigate, before leaving, had remarked that their unknown benefactors must be American. Otherwise, they would not have thought of providing chewing gum.

After stubbing out his cigar on the ground, Burton popped the stick into his mouth. He said, "This has a strange but rather delicious taste. Have you tried yours?"

"I am tempted, but I imagine I’d look like a cow
chewing her cud.”

“Forget about being a lady,” Burton said. “Do you think that beings with the power to resurrect you would have vulgar tastes?”

Alice smiled slightly and said, “I really wouldn’t know,” and placed the stick in her mouth. For a moment, they chewed idly, looking across the fire at each other. She was unable to look him full in the eyes for more than a few seconds at a time.

Burton said, “Frigate mentioned that he knew you. Of you, rather. Just who are you, if you will pardon my unseemly curiosity?”

“There are no secrets among the dead,” she replied lightly. “Or among the ex-dead, either.”

She had been born Alice Pleasance Liddell on April 25, 1852. (Burton was thirty then.) She was the direct descendant of King Edward III and his son, John of Gaunt. Her father was dean of Christ Church College of Oxford and coauthor of a famous Greek-English lexicon. (Liddell and Scott! Burton thought.) She had had a happy childhood, an excellent education, and had met many famous people of her times: Gladstone,
Matthew Arnold, the Prince of Wales, who was placed under her father’s care while he was at Oxford. Her husband had been Reginald Gervis Hargreaves, and she had loved him very much. He had been a “country gentleman,” liked to hunt, fish, play cricket, raise trees, and read French literature. She had three sons, all captains, two of whom died in the Great War of 1914–1918. (This was the second time that day that Burton had heard of the Great War.)

She talked on and on as if drink had loosened her tongue. Or as if she wanted to place a barrier of conversation between her and Burton.

She talked of Dinah, the tabby kitten she had loved when she was a child, the great trees of her husband’s arboretum, how her father, when working on his lexicon, would always sneeze at twelve o’clock in the afternoon, no one knew why...at the age of eighty, she was given an honorary Doctor of Letters by the American university, Columbia, because of the vital part she had played in the genesis of Mr. Dodgson’s famous book. (She neglected to mention the title and Burton, though a voracious reader, did not recall any works by a Mr. Dodgson.)
“That was a golden afternoon indeed,” she said, “despite the official meteorological report. On July 4, 1862, I was ten...my sisters and I were wearing black shoes, white openwork socks, white cotton dresses, and hats with large brims.”

Her eyes were wide, and she shook now and then as if she were struggling inside herself, and she began to talk even faster.

“Mr. Dodgson and Mr. Duckworth carried the picnic baskets...we set off in our boat from Folly Bridge up the Isis, upstream for a change. Mr. Duckworth rowed stroke; the drops fell off his paddle like tears of glass on the smooth mirror of the Isis, and....”

Burton heard the last words as if they had been roared at him. Astonished, he gazed at Alice, whose lips seemed to be moving as if she were conversing at a normal speech level. Her eyes were now fixed on him, but they seemed to be boring through him into a space and a time beyond. Her hands were half-raised as if she were surprised at something and could not move them.

Every sound was magnified. He could hear the breathing of the little girl, the pounding of her heart and
Alice’s, the gurgle of the workings of Alice’s intestines and of the breeze as it slipped across the branches of the trees. From far away, a cry came.

He rose and listened. What was happening? Why the heightening of senses? Why could he hear their hearts but not his? He was also aware of the shape and texture of the grass under his feet. Almost, he could feel the individual molecules of the air as they bumped into his body.

Alice, too, had risen. She said, “What is happening?” and her voice fell against him like a heavy gust of wind.

He did not reply, for he was staring at her. Now, it seemed to him, he could really see her body for the first time. And he could see her, too. The entire Alice.

Alice came toward him with her arms held out, her eyes half-shut, her mouth moist. She swayed, and she crooned, “Richard! Richard!”

Then she stopped; her eyes widened. He stepped toward her, his arms out. She cried, “No!” and turned and ran into the darkness among the trees.

For a second, he stood still. It did not seem possible that she, whom he loved as he had never loved
anybody, could not love him back.

She must be teasing him. That was it. He ran after her, and called her name over and over.

It must have been hours later when the rain fell against them. Either the effect of the drug had worn off or the cold water helped dispel it, for both seemed to emerge from the ecstasy and the dreamlike state at the same time. She looked up at him as lightning lit their features, and she screamed and pushed him violently.

He fell on the grass, but reached out a hand and grabbed her ankle as she scrambled away from him on all fours.

“What’s the matter with you?” he shouted.

Alice quit struggling. She sat down, hid her face against her knees, and her body shook with sobs. Burton rose and placed his hands under her chin and forced her to look upward. Lightning hit nearby again and showed him her tortured face.

“You promised to protect me!” she cried out.

“You didn’t act as if you wanted to be protected,” he said. “I didn’t promise to protect you against a natural
“Impulse!” she said. “Impulse! My God, I’ve never done anything like this in my life! I’ve always been good! I was a virgin when I married, and I stayed faithful to my husband all my life! And now... a total stranger! Just like that! I don’t know what got into me!”

“Then I’ve been a failure,” Burton said, and laughed. But he was beginning to feel regret and sorrow. If only it had been her own will, her own wish, then he would not now be having the slightest bite of conscience. But that gum had contained some powerful drug, and it had made them behave as lovers whose passion knew no limits. She had certainly cooperated as enthusiastically as any experienced woman in a Turkish harem.

“You needn’t feel the least bit contrite or self-reproachful,” he said gently. “You were possessed. Blame the drug.”

“I did it!” she said. “I... I! I wanted to! Oh, what a vile low whore I am!”

“I don’t remember offering you any money.”

He did not mean to be heartless. He wanted to make her so angry that she would forget her self-abasement.
And he succeeded. She jumped up and attacked his chest and face with her nails. She called him names that a highbred and gentle lady of Victoria’s day should never have known.

Burton caught her wrists to prevent further damage and held her while she spewed more filth at him. Finally, when she had fallen silent and had begun weeping again, he led her toward the campsite. The fire was wet ashes. He scraped off the top layer and dropped a handful of grass, which had been protected from the rain by the tree, onto the embers. By its light, he saw the little girl sleeping huddled between Kazz and Monat under a pile of grass beneath the iron tree. He returned to Alice, who was sitting under another tree.

“Stay away,” she said. “I never want to see you again! You have dishonored me, dirtied me! And after you gave your word to protect me!”

“You can freeze if you wish,” he said. “I was merely going to suggest that we huddle together to keep warm. But, if you wish discomfort, so be it. I’ll tell you again that what we did was generated by the drug. No, not generated. Drugs don’t generate desires or actions; they
merely allow them to be released. Our normal inhibitions were dissolved, and neither one of us can blame ourself or the other.

“However, I’d be a liar if I said I didn’t enjoy it, and you’d be a liar if you claimed you didn’t. So, why gash yourself with the knives of conscience?”

“I’m not a beast like you! I’m a good Christian God-fearing virtuous woman!”

“No doubt,” Burton said dryly. “However, let me stress again one thing. I doubt if you would have done what you did if you had not wished in your heart to do so. The drug suppressed your inhibitions, but it certainly did not put in your mind the idea of what to do. The idea was already there. Any action that resulted from taking the drug came from you, from what you wanted to do.”

“I know that!” she screamed. “Do you think I’m some stupid simple serving girl? I have a brain! I know what I did and why! It’s just that I never dreamed that I could be such...such a person! But I must have been! Must be!”

Burton tried to console her, to show her that
everyone had certain unwished-for elements in their nature. He pointed out that the dogma of original sin surely covered this; she was human, therefore, she had dark desires in her. And so forth. The more he tried to make her feel better, the worse she felt. Then, shivering with cold, and tired of the useless arguments, he gave up. He crawled in between Monat and Kazz and took the little girl in his arms. The warmth of the three bodies and the cover of the grass pile and the feel of the naked bodies soothed him. He went to sleep with Alice’s weeping coming to him faintly through the grass cover.
When he awoke, he was in the gray light of the false dawn, which the Arabs called the wolf’s tail. Monat, Kazz, and the child were still sleeping. He scratched for a while at the itchy spots caused by the rough-edged grass and then crawled out. The fire was out; water drops hung from the leaves of the trees and the tips of the grass blades. He shivered with the cold: But he did not feel tired nor have any ill effects from the drug, as he had expected. He found a pile of comparatively dry bamboo under some grass beneath a tree. He rebuilt the fire with this and in a short time was comfortable. Then he saw the bamboo containers, and he drank water from one. Alice was sitting up in a mound of grass and staring sullenly at him. Her skin was ridged with goose bumps.

“Come and get warm!” he said.

She crawled out, stood up, walked over to the bamboo bucket, bent down, scooped up water, and
splashed it over her face. Then she squatted down by the fire, warming her hands over a small flame. If everybody is naked, how quickly even the most modest lose their modesty, he thought.

A moment later, Burton heard the rustle of grass to the east. A naked head, Peter Frigate’s, appeared. He strode from the grass, and was followed by the naked head of a woman. Emerging from the grass, she revealed a wet but beautiful body. Her eyes were large and a dark green, and her lips were a little too thick for beauty. But her other features were exquisite.

Frigate was smiling broadly. He turned and pulled her into the warmth of the fire with his hand.

“You look like the cat who ate the canary,” Burton said. “What happened to your hand?”

Peter Frigate looked at the knuckles of his right hand. They were swelled, and there were scratches on the back of the hand.

“I got into a fight,” he said. He pointed a finger at the woman, who was squatting near Alice and warming herself. “It was a madhouse down by the river last night. That gum must contain a drug of some sort. You
wouldn't believe what people were doing. Or would you? After all, you're Richard Francis Burton. Anyway, all women, including the ugly ones, were occupied, one way or another. I got scared at what was going on and then I got mad. I hit two men with my grail, knocked them out. They were attacking a ten-year-old girl. I may have killed them; I hope I did. I tried to get the girl to come with me, but she ran away into the night.

"I decided to come back here. I was beginning to react pretty badly from what I'd done to those two men even if they deserved it. The drug was responsible; it must have released a lifetime of rage and frustration. So I started back here and then I came across two more men, only these were attacking a woman, this one. I think she wasn't resisting the idea of intercourse so much as she was their idea of simultaneous attack, if you know what I mean. Anyway, she was screaming, or trying to, and struggling, and they had just started to hit her. So I hit them with my fist and kicked them and then banged away on them with my grail.

"Then I took the woman, her name's Loghu, by the way, that's all I know about her since I can't understand a word of her language, and she went with
me.”

He grinned again. “But we never got there.”

He quit grinning, and shuddered.

“Then we woke up with the rain and lightning and thunder coming down like the wrath of God. I thought that maybe, don’t laugh, that it was Judgment Day, that God had given us free rein for a day so He could let us judge ourselves. And now we were going to be cast into the pit.”

He laughed tightly and said, “I’ve been an agnostic since I was fourteen years old, and I died one at the age of ninety, although I was thinking about calling in a priest then. But the little child that’s scared of the Old Father God and Hellfire and Damnation, he’s still down there, even in the old man. Or in the young man raised from the dead.”

“What happened?” Burton said. “Did the world end in a crack of thunder and a stroke of lightning? You’re still here, I see, and you’ve not renounced the delights of sin in the person of this woman.”

“We found a grailstone near the mountains. About a mile west of here. We got lost, wandered around, cold,
wet, jumping every time the lightning struck nearby. Then we found the grailstone. It was jammed with people, but they were exceptionally friendly, and there were so many bodies it was very warm, even if some rain did leak down through the grass. We finally went to sleep, long after the rain quit. When I woke up, I searched through the grass until I found Loghu. She got lost during the night, somehow. She seemed pleased to see me, though, and I like her. There’s an affinity between us. Maybe I’ll find out why when she learns to speak English. I tried that and French and German and tags of Russian, Lithuanian, Gaelic, all the Scandinavian tongues, including Finnish, classical Nahuatl, Arabic, Hebrew, Onondaga Iroquois, Ojibway, Italian, Spanish, Latin, modern and Homeric Greek, and a dozen others. Result: a blank look.”

“You must be quite a linguist,” Burton said.

“I’m not fluent in any of those,” Frigate said. “I can read most of them but can speak only everyday phrases. Unlike you, I am not master of thirty-nine languages—including pornography.”

The fellow seemed to know much about himself,
Burton thought. He would find out just how much at a later time.

“I’ll be frank with you, Peter,” Burton said. “Your account of your aggressiveness amazed me. I had not thought you capable of attacking and beating that many men. Your queasiness....”

“It was the gum, of course. It opened the door of the cage.”

Frigate squatted down by Loghu and rubbed his shoulder against hers. She looked at him out of slightly slanted eyes. The woman would be beautiful once her hair grew out.

Frigate continued, “I’m so timorous and queasy because I am afraid of the anger, the desire to do violence, that lies not too deeply within me. I fear violence because I am violent. I fear what will happen if I am not afraid. Hell, I’ve known that for forty years. Much good the knowledge has done me!”

He looked at Alice and said, “Good morning!”

Alice replied cheerily enough, and she even smiled at Loghu when she was introduced. She would look at Burton, and she would answer his direct questions. But
she would not chat with him or give him anything but a stern face.

Monat, Kazz, and the little girl, all yawning, came to the fireside. Burton prowled around the edges of the camp and found that the Triestans were gone. Some had left their grails behind. He cursed them for their carelessness and thought about leaving the grails in the grass to teach them a lesson. But he eventually placed the cylinders in depressions on the grailstone.

If their owners did not return, they would go hungry unless someone shared their food with them. In the meantime, the food in their grails would have to be untouched. He would be unable to open them. They had discovered yesterday that only the owner of a grail could open it. Experimentation with a long stick had determined also that the owner had to touch the grail with his fingers or some part of his body before the lid would open. It was Frigate’s theory that a mechanism in the grail was keyed to the peculiar configuration of skin voltage of the owner. Or perhaps the grail contained a very sensitive detector of the individual’s brain waves.

The sky had become bright by then. The sun was still
on the other side of the 20,000-foot-high eastern mountain. Approximately a half hour later, the grailrock spurted blue flame with a roll of thunder. Thunder from the stones along the river echoed against the mountain.

The grails yielded bacon and eggs, ham, toast, butter, jam, milk, a quarter of a cantaloupe, cigarettes, and a cupful of dark brown crystals which Frigate said was instant coffee. He drank the milk in one cup, rinsed it out in water in a bamboo container, filled the cup with water, and set it by the fire. When the water was boiling, he put a teaspoonful of the crystals into the water and stirred it. The coffee was delicious, and there were enough crystals to provide six cups. Then Alice put the crystals into the water before heating it over the fire and found that it was not necessary to use the fire. The water boiled within three seconds after the crystals were placed into the cold water.

After eating, they washed out the containers and replaced them in the grails. Burton strapped his grail onto his waist. He intended to explore, and he certainly was not going to leave the grail on the stone. Though it could do no one but himself any good, vicious people might take it just for the pleasure of seeing him starve.
Burton started his language lessons with the little girl and Kazz, and Frigate got Loghu to sit in on them. Frigate suggested that a universal language should be adopted because of the many many languages and dialects, perhaps fifty to sixty thousand, that mankind had used in his several million years of existence and which he was using along the river. That is, provided that all of mankind had been resurrected. After all, all he knew about was the few square miles he had seen. But it would be a good idea to start propagating Esperanto, the synthetic language invented by the Polish oculist, Doctor Zamenhof, in 1887. Its grammar was very simple and absolutely regular, and its sound combinations, though not as easy for everybody to pronounce as claimed, were still relatively easy. And the basis of the vocabulary was Latin with many words from English and German and other West European languages.

“I had heard about it before I died,” Burton said. “But I never saw any samples of it. Perhaps it may become useful. But, in the meantime, I’ll teach these two English.”

“But most of the people here speak Italian or
Slovenian!” Frigate said.

“That may be true, though we haven’t any survey as yet. However, I don’t intend to stay here, you can be sure of that.”

“I could have predicted that,” Frigate muttered. “You always did get restless; you had to move on.”

Burton glared at Frigate and then started the lessons. For about fifteen minutes, he drilled them in the identification and pronunciation of nineteen nouns and a few verbs: fire, bamboo, grail, man, woman, girl, hand, feet, eye, teeth, eat, walk, run, talk, danger, I, you, they, us. He intended that he should learn as much from them as they from him. In time, he would be able to speak their tongues, whatever they were.

The sun cleared the top of the eastern range. The air became warmer, and they let the fire die. They were well into the second day of resurrection. And they knew almost nothing about this world or what their eventual fate was supposed to be or Who was determining their fate.

Lev Ruach stuck his big-nosed face through the grass and said, “May I join you?”
Burton nodded, and Frigate said, “Sure, why not?”

Ruach stepped out of the grass. A short pale-skinned woman with great brown eyes and lovely delicate features followed him. Ruach introduced her as Tanya Kauwitz. He had met her last night, and they had stayed together, since they had a number of things in common. She was of Russian-Jewish descent, was born in 1958 in the Bronx, New York City, had become an English schoolteacher, married a businessman who made a million and dropped dead when she was forty-five, leaving her free to marry a wonderful man with whom she had been in love for fifteen years. Six months later, she was dead of cancer. Tanya, not Lev, gave this information and in one sentence.

“It was hell down on the plains last night,” Lev said. “Tanya and I had to run for our lives into the woods. So I decided that I would find you and ask if we could stay with you. I apologize for my hasty remarks of yesterday, Mr. Burton. I think that my observations were valid, but the attitudes I was speaking of should be considered in the context of your other attitudes.”

“We’ll go into that some other time,” Burton said.
“At the time I wrote that book, I was suffering from the vile and malicious lies of the moneylenders of Damascus, and they....”

“Certainly, Mr. Burton,” Ruach said. “As you say, later. I just wanted to make the point that I consider you to be a very capable and strong person, and I would like to join your group. We’re in a state of anarchy, if you can call anarchy a state, and many of us need protection.”

Burton did not like to be interrupted. He scowled and said, “Please permit me to explain myself. I....”

Frigate stood up and said, “Here come the others. Wonder where they’ve been?”

Only four of the original nine had come back, however. Maria Tucci explained that they had wandered away together after chewing the gum, and eventually ended up by one of the big bonfires on the plains. Then many things had happened; there had been fights and attacks by men on women, men on men, women on men, women on women, and even attacks on children. The group had split up in the chaos. She had met the other three only an hour ago while she was
searching in the hills for the grailstone.

Lev added some details. The results of chewing the narcotic gum had been tragic, amusing, or gratifying, depending, apparently, upon individual reaction. The gum had had an aphrodisiac effect upon many, but it also had many other effects. Consider the husband and wife who had died in Opcina, a suburb of Trieste, in 1899. They had been resurrected within six feet of each other. They had wept with joy at being reunited when so many couples had not been. They thanked God for their good luck, though they also had made some loud comments that this world was not what they had been promised. But they had had fifty years of married bliss and now looked forward to being together for eternity.

Only a few minutes after both had chewed the gum, the man had strangled his wife, heaved her body into the river, picked up another woman in his arms, and run off into the darkness of the woods with her.

Another man had leaped upon a grailstone and delivered a speech that lasted all night, even through the rain. To the few who could hear, and the even fewer who listened, he had demonstrated the principles of a
perfect society and how these could be carried out in practice. By dawn, he was so hoarse he could only croak a few words. On Earth, he had seldom bothered to vote.

A man and a woman, outraged at the public display of carnality, had forcefully tried to separate couples. The results: bruises, bloody noses, split lips, and two concussions, all theirs. Some men and women had spent the night on their knees praying and confessing their sins.

Some children had been badly beaten, raped, or murdered, or all three. But not everybody had succumbed to the madness. A number of adults had protected the children or tried to.

Ruach described the despair and disgust of a Croat Moslem and an Austrian Jew because their grails contained pork. A Hindu screamed obscenities because his grail offered him meat.

A fourth man, crying out that they were in the hands of devils, had hurled his cigarettes into the river.

Several had said to him, “Why didn’t you give us the cigarettes if you didn’t want them?”
“Tobacco is the invention of the devil; it was the weed created by Satan in the Garden of Eden!”

A man said, “At least you could have shared the cigarettes with us. It wouldn’t hurt you.”

“I would like to throw all the evil stuff into the river!” he had shouted.

“You’re an insufferable bigot and crazy to boot,” another had replied, and struck him in the mouth. Before the tobacco-hater could get up off the ground, he was hit and kicked by four others.

Later, the tobacco-hater had staggered up and, weeping with rage, cried, “What have I done to deserve this, O Lord, my God! I have always been a good man. I gave thousands of pounds to charities, I worshipped in Thy temple three times a week, I waged a lifelong war against sin and corruption, I….”

“I know you!” a woman had shouted. She was a tall blue-eyed girl with a handsome face and well-curved figure. “I know you! Sir Robert Smithson!”

He had stopped talking and had blinked at her. “I don’t know you!”
“You wouldn’t! But you should! I’m one of the thousands of girls who had to work sixteen hours a day, six and a half days a week, so you could live in your big house on the hill and dress in fine clothes and so your horses and dogs could eat far better than I could! I was one of your factory girls! My father slaved for you, my mother slaved for you, my brothers and sisters, those who weren’t too sick or who didn’t die because of too little or too bad food, dirty beds, drafty windows, and rat bites, slaved for you. My father lost a hand in one of your machines, and you kicked him out without a penny. My mother died of the white plague. I was coughing out my life, too, my fine baronet, while you stuffed yourself with rich foods and sat in easy chairs and dozed off in your big expensive church pew and gave thousands to feed the poor unfortunates in Asia and to send missionaries to convert the poor heathens in Africa. I coughed out my lungs, and I had to go a-whoring to make enough money to feed my kid sisters and brothers. And I caught syphilis, you bloody pious bastard, because you wanted to wring out every drop of sweat and blood I had and those poor devils like me had! I died in prison because you told the police they
should deal harshly with prostitution. You...you...!

Smithson had gone red at first, then pale. Then he had drawn himself up straight, scowling at the woman, and said, “You whores always have somebody to blame for your unbridled lusts, your evil ways. God knows that I followed His ways.”

He had turned and had walked off, but the woman ran after him and swung her grail at him. It came around swiftly; somebody shouted; he spun and ducked. The grail almost grazed the top of his head.

Smithson ran past the woman before she could recover and quickly lost himself in the crowd. Unfortunately, Ruach said, very few understood what was going on because they couldn’t speak English.

“Sir Robert Smithson,” Burton said. “If I remember correctly, he owned cotton mills and steelworks in Manchester. He was noted for his philanthropies and his good works among the heathens. Died in 1870 or thereabouts at the age of eighty.”

“And probably convinced that he would be rewarded in Heaven,” Lev Ruach said. “Of course, it would never have occurred to him that he was a
murderer many times over.”

“If he hadn’t exploited the poor, someone else would have done so.”

“That is an excuse used by many throughout men’s history,” Lev said. “Besides, there were industrialists in your country who saw to it that wages and conditions in their factories were improved. Robert Owen was one, I believe.”
don't see much sense in arguing about what went on in the past," Frigate said. "I think we should do something about our present situation."

Burton stood up. "You're right, Yank! We need roofs over our heads, tools, God knows what else! But first, I think we should take a look at the cities of the plains and see what the citizens are doing there."

At that moment, Alice came through the trees on the hill above them. Frigate saw her first. He burst out laughing. "The latest in ladies' wear!"

She had cut lengths of the grass with her scissors and plaited them into a two-piece garment. One was a sort of poncho which covered her breasts and the other a skirt which fell to her calves.

The effect was strange, though one that she should have expected. When she was naked, the hairless head still did not detract too much from her femaleness and her beauty. But with the green, bulky, and shapeless
garments, her face suddenly became masculine and ugly.

The other women crowded around her and examined the weaving of the grass lengths and the grass belt that secured the skirt.

“It’s very itchy, very uncomfortable,” Alice said. “But it’s decent. That’s all I can say for it.”

“Apparently you did not mean what you said about your unconcern with nudity in a land where all are nude,” Burton said.

Alice stared coolly and said, “I expect that everybody will be wearing these. Every decent man and woman, that is.”

“I supposed that Mrs. Grundy would rear her ugly head here,” Burton replied.

“It was a shock to be among so many naked people,” Frigate said. “Even though nudity on the beach and in the private home became commonplace before I died. But it didn’t take long for everyone to get used to it. Everyone except the hopelessly neurotic, I suppose.”

Burton swung around and spoke to the other
women. “What about you ladies? Are you going to wear these ugly and scratchy haycocks because one of your sex suddenly decides that she has private parts again? Can something that has been so public become private?”

Loghu, Tanya, and Alice did not understand him because he spoke in Italian. He repeated in English for the benefit of the last two.

Alice flushed and said, “What I wear is my business. If anybody else cares to go naked when I’m decently covered, well…!”

Loghu had not understood a word, but she understood what was going on. She laughed and turned away. The other women seemed to be trying to guess what each one intended to do. The ugliness and the uncomfortableness of the clothing were not the issues.

“While you females are trying to make up your minds,” Burton said, “it would be nice if you would take a bamboo pail and go with us to the river. We can bathe, fill the pails with water, find out the situation in the plains, and then return here. We may be able to build several houses—or temporary shelters—before
They started down the hills, pushing through the grass and carrying their grails, chert weapons, bamboo spears, and buckets. They had not gone far before they encountered a number of people. Apparently, many plains dwellers had decided to move out. Not only that, some had also found chert and had made tools and weapons. These had learned the technique of working with stone from somebody, possibly from other primitives in the area. So far, Burton had seen only two specimens of non-*Homo sapiens*, and these were with him. But wherever the techniques had been learned, they had been put to good use. They passed two half-completed bamboo huts. These were round, one-roomed, and would have conical roofs thatched with the huge triangular leaves from the iron trees and with the long hill grass. One man, using a chert adze and axe, was building a short-legged bamboo bed.

Except for a number erecting rather crude huts or lean-tos without stone tools at the edge of the plains, and for a number swimming in the river, the plain was deserted. The bodies from last night’s madness had been removed. So far, no one had put on a grass skirt,
and many stared at Alice or even laughed and made raucous comments. Alice turned red, but she made no move to get rid of her clothes. The sun was getting hot, however, and she was scratching under her breast garment and under her skirt. It was a measure of the intensity of the irritation that she, raised by strict Victorian upper-class standards, would scratch in public.

However, when they got to the river, they saw a dozen heaps of stuff that turned out to be grass dresses. These had been left on the edge of the river by the men and women now laughing, splashing, and swimming in the river.

It was certainly a contrast to the beaches he knew. These were the same people who had accepted the bathing machines, the suits that covered them from ankle to neck, and all the other modest devices, as absolutely moral and vital to the continuation of the proper society—theirs. Yet, only one day after finding themselves here, they were swimming in the nude. And enjoying it.

Part of the acceptance of their unclothed state came
from the shock of the resurrection. In addition, there was not much they could do about it that first day. And there had been a leavening of the civilized with savage peoples, or tropical civilized peoples, who were not particularly shocked by nudity.

He called out to a woman who was standing to her waist in the water. She had a coarsely pretty face and sparkling blue eyes.

“That is the woman who attacked Sir Robert Smithson,” Lev Ruach said. “I believe her name is Wilfreda Allport.”

Burton looked at her curiously and with appreciation of her splendid bust. He called out, “How’s the water?”

“Very nice!” she said, smiling.

He unstrapped his grail, put down the container, which held his chert knife and hand axe, and waded in with his cake of green soap. The water felt as if it was about ten degrees below his body temperature. He soaped himself while he struck up a conversation with Wilfreda. If she still harbored any resentment about Smithson, she did not show it. Her accent was heavily North Country, perhaps Cumberland.
Burton said to her, “I heard about your little to-do with the late great hypocrite, the baronet. You should be happy now, though. You’re healthy and young and beautiful again, and you don’t have to toil for your bread. Also, you can do for love what you had to do for money.”

There was no use beating around the bush with a factory girl. Not that she had any.

Wilfreda gave him a stare as cool as any he had received from Alice Hargreaves. She said, “Now, haven’t you the ruddy nerve? English, aren’t you? I can’t place your accent, London, I’d say, with a touch of something foreign.”

“You’re close,” he said, laughing. “I’m Richard Burton, by the way. How would you like to join our group? We’ve banded together for protection, we’re going to build some houses this afternoon. We’ve got a grailstone all to ourselves up in the hills.”

Wilfreda looked at the Tau Cetan and the Neanderthal. “They’re part of your mob, now? I heard about ’em; they say the monster’s a man from the stars, come along in A.D. 2000, they do say.”
“He won’t hurt you,” Burton said. “Neither will the subhuman. What do you say?”

“I’m only a woman,” she said. “What do I have to offer?”

“All a woman has to offer,” Burton said, grinning.

Surprisingly, she burst out laughing. She touched his chest and said, “Now ain’t you the clever one? What’s the matter, you can’t get no girl of your own?”

“I had one and lost her,” Burton said. That was not entirely true. He was not sure what Alice intended to do. He could not understand why she continued to stay with his group if she was so horrified and disgusted. Perhaps it was because she preferred the evil she knew to the evil she did not know. At the moment, he himself felt only disgust at her stupidity, but he did not want her to go. That love he had experienced last night may have been caused by the drug, but he still felt a residue of it. Then why was he asking this woman to join them? Perhaps it was to make Alice jealous. Perhaps it was to have a woman to fall back upon if Alice refused him tonight. Perhaps... he did not know why.

Alice stood upon the bank, her toes almost touching
the water. The bank was, at this point, only an inch above the water. The short grass continued from the plain to form a solid mat that grew down on the river bed. Burton could feel the grass under his feet as far as he could wade. He threw his soap onto the bank and swam out for about forty feet and dived down. Here the current suddenly became stronger and the depth much greater. He swam down, his eyes open, until the light failed and his ears hurt. He continued on down and then his fingers touched bottom. There was grass there, too.

When he swam back to where the water was up to his waist, he saw that Alice had shed her clothes. She was in closer to the shore, but squatting so that the water was up to her neck. She was soaping her head and face.

He called to Frigate, “Why don’t you come in?”

“I’m guarding the grails,” Frigate said.

“Very good!”

Burton swore under his breath. He should have thought of that and appointed somebody as a guard. He wasn’t in actuality a good leader, he tended to let things go to pot, to permit them to disintegrate. Admit it. On
Earth he had been the head of many expeditions, none of which had been distinguished by efficiency or strong management. Yet, during the Crimean War, when he was head of Beatson’s Irregulars, training the wild Turkish cavalry, the Bashi-Bazouks, he had done quite well, far better than most. So he should not be reprimanding himself....

Lev Ruach climbed out of the water and ran his hands over his skinny body to take off the drops. Burton got out, too, and sat down beside him. Alice turned her back on him, whether on purpose or not he had no way of knowing, of course.

“It’s not just being young again that delights me,” Lev said in his heavily accented English. “It’s having this leg back.”

He tapped his right knee.

“I lost it in a traffic accident on the New Jersey Turnpike when I was fifty years old.”

He laughed and said, “There was an irony to the situation that some might call fate. I had been captured by Arabs two years before when I was looking for minerals in the desert, in the state of Israel, you
understand...."  

"You mean Palestine?" Burton said.

"The Jews founded an independent state in 1948," Lev said. "You wouldn't know about that, of course. I'll tell you all about it sometime. Anyway, I was captured and tortured by Arab guerrillas. I won't go into the details; it makes me sick to recall it. But I escaped that night, though not before bashing in the heads of two with a rock and shooting two more with a rifle. The others fled, and I got away. I was lucky. An army patrol picked me up. However, two years later, when I was in the States, driving down the Turnpike, a truck, a big semi, I'll describe that later, too, cut in front of me and jackknifed and I crashed into it. I was badly hurt, and my right leg was amputated below the knee. But the point of this story is that the truck driver had been born in Syria. So, you see the Arabs were out to get me, and they did, though they did not kill me. That job was done by our friend from Tau Ceti. Though I can't say he did anything to humanity except hurry up its doom."

"What do you mean by that?" Burton said.
“There were millions dying from famine, even the States were on a strictly rationed diet, and pollution of our water, land, and air was killing other millions. The scientists said that half of Earth’s oxygen supply would be cut off in ten years because the phytoplankton of the oceans—they furnished half the world’s oxygen, you know—were dying. The oceans were polluted.”

“The oceans?”

“You don’t believe it? Well, you died in 1890, so you find it hard to credit. But some people were predicting in 1968 exactly what did happen in 2008. I believed them, I was a biochemist. But most of the population, especially those who counted, the masses and the politicians, refused to believe until it was too late. Measures were taken as the situation got worse, but they were always too weak and too late and fought against by groups that stood to lose money, if effective measures were taken. But it’s a long sad story, and if we’re to build houses, we’d best start immediately after lunch.”

Alice came out of the river and ran her hands over her body. The sun and the breeze dried her off quickly.
She picked up her grass clothes but did not put them back on. Wilfreda asked her about them. Alice replied that they made her itch too much, but she would keep them to wear at night if it got cold. Alice was polite to Wilfreda but obviously aloof. She had overheard much of the conversation and so knew that Wilfreda had been a factory girl who had become a whore and then had died of syphilis. Or at least Wilfreda thought that the disease had killed her. She did not remember dying. Undoubtedly, as she had said cheerily, she had lost her mind first.

Alice, hearing this, moved even further away. Burton grinned, wondering what she would do if she knew that he had suffered from the same disease, caught from a slave girl in Cairo when he had been disguised as a Moslem during his trip to Mecca in 1853. He had been “cured” and his mind had not been physically affected, though his mental suffering had been intense. But the point was that resurrection had given everybody a fresh, young, and undiseased body, and what a person had been on Earth should not influence another’s attitude toward them.

*Should* not was not, however, *would* not.
He could not really blame Alice Hargreaves. She was the product of her society—like all women, she was what men had made her—and she had strength of character and flexibility of mind to lift herself above some of the prejudices of her time and her class. She had adapted to the nudity well enough, and she was not openly hostile or contemptuous of the girl. She had performed an act with Burton that went against a lifetime of overt and covert indoctrination. And that was on the night of the first day of her life after death, when she should have been on her knees singing hosannas because she had “sinned” and promising that she would never “sin” again as long as she was not put in hellfire.

As they walked across the plain, he thought about her, turning his head now and then to look back at her. That hairless head made her face look so much older but the hairlessness made her look so childlike below the navel. They all bore this contradiction, old man or woman above the neck, young child below the belly button.

He dropped back until he was by her side. This put him behind Frigate and Loghu. The view of Loghu would yield some profit even if his attempt to talk to
Alice resulted in nothing. Loghu had a beautifully rounded posterior; her buttocks were like two eggs. And she swayed as enchantingly as Alice.

He spoke in a low voice, “If last night distressed you so much, why do you stay with me?”

Her beautiful face became twisted and ugly.

“I am not staying with you! I am staying with the group! Moreover, I’ve been thinking about last night, though it pains me to do so. I must be fair. It was the narcotic in that hideous gum that made both of us behave the…way we did. At least, I know it was responsible for my behavior. And I’m giving you the benefit of the doubt.”

“Then there’s no hope of repetition?”

“How can you ask that! Certainly not! How dare you?”

“I did not force you,” he said. “As I have pointed out, you did what you would do if you were not restrained by your inhibitions. Those inhibitions are good things—under certain circumstances, such as being the lawful wedded wife of a man you love in the England of Earth. But Earth no longer exists, not as we
knew it. Neither does England. Neither does English society. And if all of mankind has been resurrected and is scattered along this river, you still may never see your husband again. You are no longer married. Remember....’til death do us part? You have died, and, therefore, parted. Moreover, there is no giving into marriage in heaven.”

“You are a blasphemer, Mr. Burton. I read about you in the newspapers, and I read some of your books about Africa and India and that one about the Mormons in the States. I also heard stories, most of which I found hard to believe, they made you out to be so wicked. Reginald was very indignant when he read your Kasidah. He said he’d have no such foul atheistic literature in his house, and he threw all your books into the furnace.”

“If I’m so wicked, and you feel you’re a fallen woman, why don’t you leave?”

“Must I repeat everything? The next group might have even worse men in it. And, as you have been so kind to point out, you did not force me. Anyway, I’m sure that you have some kind of heart beneath that
cynical and mocking air. I saw you weeping when you were carrying Gwenafra and she was crying.”

“You have found me out,” he said, grinning. “Very well. So be it. I will be chivalrous, I will not attempt to seduce you or to molest you in any way. But the next time you see me chewing the gum, you would do well to hide. Meanwhile, I give my word of honor, you have nothing to fear from me as long as I am not under the influence of the gum.”

Her eyes widened, and she stopped. “You plan to use it again?”

“Why not? It apparently turned some people into violent beasts, but it had no such effect on me. I feel no craving for it, so I doubt it’s habit-forming. I used to smoke a pipe of opium now and then, you know, and I did not become addicted to it, so I don’t suppose I have a psychological weakness for drugs.”

“I understood that you were very often deep in your cups, Mr. Burton. You and that nauseating creature, Mr. Swinburne….”

She stopped talking. A man had called out to her, and, though she did not understand Italian, she
understood his obscene gesture. She blushed all over but walked briskly on. Burton glared at the man. He was a well-built brown-skinned youth with a big nose, a weak chin, and close-set eyes. His speech was that of the criminal class of the city of Bologna, where Burton had spent much time while investigating Etruscan relics and graves. Behind him were ten men, most of them as unprepossessing and as wicked-looking as their leader, and five women. It was evident that the men wanted to add more women to the group. It was also evident that they would like to get their hands on the stone weapons of Burton’s group. They were armed only with their grails or with bamboo sticks.
Burton spoke sharply, and his people closed up. Kazz did not understand his words, but he sensed at once what was happening. He dropped back to form the rear guard with Burton. His brutish appearance and the hand axe in his huge fist checked the Bolognese somewhat. They followed the group, making loud comments and threats, but they did not get much closer. When they reached the hills, however, the leader of the gang shouted a command, and it attacked.

The youth with the close-set eyes, yelling, swinging his grail at the end of the strap, ran at Burton. Burton gauged the swing of the cylinder and then launched his bamboo spear just as the grail was arcing outward. The stone tip went into the man’s solar plexus, and he fell on his side with the spear sticking in him. The subhuman struck a swinging grail with a stick, which was knocked out of his hand. He leaped inward and brought the edge of the hand axe against the top of the head of his attacker, and that man went down with a bloody skull.
Little Lev Ruach threw his grail into the chest of a man and ran up and jumped on him. His feet drove into the face of the man, who was getting up again. The man went backward; Ruach bounded up and gashed the man’s shoulder with his chert knife. The man, screaming, got to his feet and raced away.

Frigate did better than Burton had expected him to, since he had turned pale and begun shaking when the gang had first challenged them. His grail was strapped to his left wrist while his right held a hand axe. He charged into the group, was hit on the shoulder with a grail, the impact of which was lessened when he partially blocked it with his grail, and he fell on his side. A man lifted a bamboo stick with both hands to bring it down on Frigate, but he rolled away, bringing his grail up and blocking the stick as it came down. Then he was up, his head butting into the man and carrying him back. Both went down, Frigate on top, and his stone axe struck the man twice on the temple.

Alice had thrown her grail into the face of a man and then stabbed at him with the fire-sharpened end of her bamboo spear. Loghu ran around to the side of the man and hit him across the head with her stick so hard that
he dropped to his knees.

The fight was over in sixty seconds. The other men fled with their women behind them. Burton turned the screaming leader onto his back and pulled his spear out of the pit of his stomach. The tip had not gone in more than half an inch.

The man got to his feet and, clutching the streaming wound, staggered off across the plains. Two of the gang were unconscious but would probably survive. The man Frigate had attacked was dead.

The American had turned from pale to red and then back to pale. But he did not look contrite or sickened. If his expression held anything, it was elation. And relief.

He said, “That was the first man I’ve ever killed! The first!”

“I doubt that it’ll be the last,” Burton said. “Unless you’re killed first.”

Ruach, looking at the corpse, said, “A dead man looks just as dead here as on Earth. I wonder where those who are killed in the afterlife go?”

“If we live long enough, we might find out. You two
women gave a very fine account of yourselves.”

Alice said, “I did what had to be done,” and walked away. She was pale and shaking. Loghu, on the other hand, seemed exhilarated.

They got to the grailstone about a half-hour before noon. Things had changed. Their quiet little hollow contained about sixty people, many of whom were working on pieces of chert. One man was holding a bloody eye into which a chip of stone had flown. Several more were bleeding from the face or holding smashed fingers.

Burton was upset but he could do nothing about it. The only hope for regaining the quiet retreat was that the lack of water would drive the intruders away. That hope went quickly. A woman told him that there was a small cataract about a mile and a half to the west. It fell from the top of the mountain down the tip of an arrowhead-shaped canyon and into a large hole which it had only half-filled. Eventually, it should spill out and take a course through the hills and spread out on the plain. Unless, of course, stone from the mountain base was brought down to make a channel for the stream.
“Or we make water pipes out of the big bamboo,” Frigate said.

They put their grails on the rock, each carefully noting the exact location of his, and they waited. He intended to move on after the grails were filled. A location halfway between the cataract and the grailstone would be advantageous, and they might not be so crowded.

The blue flames roared out above the stone just as the sun reached its zenith. This time, the grails yielded an antipasto salad, Italian black bread with melted garlic butter, spaghetti and meatballs, a cupful of dry red wine, grapes, more coffee crystals, ten cigarettes, a marijuana stick, a cigar, more toilet paper and a cake of soap, and four chocolate creams. Some people complained that they did not like Italian food, but no one refused to eat.

The group, smoking their cigarettes, walked along the base of the mountain to the cataract. This was at the end of the triangular canyon, where a number of men and women had set up camp around the hole. The water was icy cold. After washing out their containers,
drying them, and refilling the buckets, they went back in the direction of the grailstone. After a half mile, they chose a hill covered by pines except for the apex, on which a great iron tree grew. There was plenty of bamboo of all sizes growing around them. Under the direction of Kazz and of Frigate, who had spent a few years in Malaysia, they cut down bamboo and built their huts. These were round buildings with a single door and a window in the rear and a conical thatched roof. They worked swiftly and did not try for nicety, so that by dinnertime everything except the roofs was finished. Frigate and Monat were picked to stay behind as guards while the others took the grails to the stone. Here they found about 300 people constructing lean-tos and huts. Burton had expected this. Most people would not want to walk a half mile every day three times a day for their meals. They would prefer to cluster around the grailstones. The huts here were arranged haphazardly and closer than necessary. There was still the problem of getting fresh water, which was why he was surprised that there were so many here. But he was informed by a pretty Slovene that a source of water had been found close by only this afternoon. A spring ran from a cave
almost in a straight line up from the rock. Burton investigated. Water had broken out from a cave and was trickling down the face of the cliff into a basin about fifty feet wide and eight deep.

He wondered if this was an afterthought on the part of Whoever had created this place.

He returned just as the blue flames thundered.

Kazz suddenly stopped to relieve himself. He did not bother to turn away; Loghu giggled; Tanya turned red; the Italian women were used to seeing men leaning against buildings wherever the fancy took them; Wilfreda was used to anything; Alice, surprisingly, ignored him as if he were a dog. And that might explain her attitude. To her, Kazz was not human and so could not be expected to act as humans were expected to act.

There was no reason to reprimand Kazz for this just now, especially when Kazz did not understand his language. But he would have to use sign language the next time Kazz proceeded to relieve himself while they were sitting around and eating. Everybody had to learn certain limits, and anything that upset others while they were eating should be forbidden. And that, he thought,
included quarreling during mealtimes. To be fair, he would have to admit that he had participated in more than his share of dinner disputes in his lifetime.

He patted Kazz on top of the breadloaf-shaped skull as he passed him. Kazz looked at him and Burton shook his head, figuring that Kazz would find out why when he learned to speak English. But he forgot his intention, and he stopped and rubbed the top of his own head. Yes, there was a very fine fuzz there.

He felt his face, which was as smooth as ever. But his armpits were fuzzy. The pubic area was, however, smooth. That might be a slower growth than scalp hair, though. He told the others, and they inspected themselves and each other. It was true. Their hair was returning, at least, on their heads and their armpits. Kazz was the exception. His hair was growing out all over him except on his face.

The discovery made them jubilant. Laughing, joking, they walked along the base of the mountain in the shadow. They turned east then and waded through the grass of four hills before coming up the slope of the hill they were beginning to think of as home. Halfway up it,
they stopped, silent. Frigate and Monat had not returned their calls.

After telling them to spread out and to proceed slowly, Burton led them up the hill. The huts were deserted, and several of the little huts had been kicked or trampled. He felt a chill, as if a cold wind had blown on him. The silence, the damaged huts, the complete absence of the two, was foreboding.

A minute later, they heard a halloo and turned to look down the hill. The skin-heads of Monat and Frigate appeared in the grasses and then they were coming up the hill. Monat looked grave, but the American was grinning. His face was bruised over the cheek, and the knuckles of both hands were torn and bloody.

“We just got back from chasing off four men and three women who wanted to take over our huts,” he said. “I told them they could build their own, and that you’d be back right away and beat hell out of them if they didn’t take off. They understood me all right, they spoke English. They had been resurrected at the grailstone a mile north of ours along the river. Most of
the people there were Triestans of your time, but about ten, all together, were Chicagoans who’d died about 1985. The distribution of the dead sure is funny, isn’t it? There’s a random choice operating along here, I’d say.

“Anyway, I told them what Mark Twain said the devil said. You Chicagoans think you’re the best people here whereas the truth is you’re just the most numerous. That didn’t go over very well; they seemed to think that I should be buddy-buddies with them because I was an American. One of the women offered herself to me if I’d change sides and take their part in appropriating the huts. She was the one who was living with two of the men. I said no. They said they’d take the huts anyway, and over my dead body if they had to.

“But they talked more brave than they were. Monat scared them just by looking at them. And we did have the stone weapons and spears. Still, their leader was whipping them up into rushing us, when I took a good hard look at one of them.

“His head was bald so he didn’t have that thick straight black hair, and he was about thirty-five when I
first knew him, and he wore thick shell-rimmed glasses then, and I hadn’t seen him for fifty-four years. But I stepped up closer, and I looked into his face, which was grinning just like I remembered it, like the proverbial skunk, and I said, “Lem? Lem Sharkko! It is Lem Sharkko, isn’t it?”

“His eyes opened then, and he grinned even more, and he took my hand, my hand, after all he’d done to me, and he cried out as if we were long-lost brothers, “It is, it is! It’s Pete Frigate! My God, Pete Frigate!”

“I was almost glad to see him and for the same reason he said he was glad to see me. But then I told myself, ‘This is the crooked publisher that cheated you out of $4,000 when you were just getting started as a writer and ruined your career for years. This is the slimy schlock dealer who cheated you and at least four other writers out of a lot of money and then declared bankruptcy and skipped. And then he inherited a lot of money from an uncle and lived very well indeed, thus proving that crime did pay. This is the man you have not forgotten, not only because of what he did to you and others but because of so many other crooked publishers you ran into later on.’”
Burton grinned and said, “I once said that priests, politicians, and publishers would never get past the gates of heaven. But I was wrong, that is, if this is heaven.”

“Yeah, I know,” Frigate said. “I’ve never forgotten that you said that. Anyway, I put down my natural joy at seeing a familiar face again, and I said, ‘Sharkko…’”

“With a name like that, he got you to trust him?” Alice said.

“He told me it was a Czech name that meant trustworthy. Like everything else he told me, it was a lie. Anyway, I had just about convinced myself that Monat and I should let them take over. We’d retire and then we’d run them out when you came back from the grailstone. That was the smart thing to do. But when I recognized Sharkko, I got so mad! I said, grinning, ‘Gee, it’s really great to see your face after all these years. Especially here where there are no cops or courts!’

“And I hit him right in the nose! He went over flat on his back, with his nose spouting blood. Monat and I rushed the others, and I kicked one, and then another
hit me on the cheek with his grail. I was knocked silly, but Monat knocked one out with the butt of his spear and cracked the ribs of another; he’s skinny but he’s awful fast, and what he doesn’t know about self-defense—or offense! Sharkko got up then and I hit with my other fist but only a glancing blow along his jaw. It hurt my fist more than it hurt his jaw. He spun around and took off, and I went after him. The others took off, too, with Monat beating them on the tail with his spear. I chased Sharkko up the next hill and caught him on the downslope and punched him but good! He crawled away, begging for mercy, which I gave him with a kick in the rear that rolled him howling all the way down the hill.”

Frigate was still shaking with reaction, but he was pleased.

“I was afraid I was going to turn chicken there for a while,” he said. “After all, all that had been so long ago and in another world, and maybe we’re here to forgive our enemies—and some of our friends—and be forgiven. But on the other hand, I thought, maybe we’re here so we can give a little back of what we had to take on Earth. What about it, Lev? Wouldn’t you like a
chance to turn Hitler over a fire? Very slowly over a fire?”

“I don’t think you could compare a crooked publisher to Hitler,” Ruach said. “No, I wouldn’t want to turn him over a fire. I might want to starve him to death, or feed him just enough to keep him alive. But I wouldn’t do that. What good would it do? Would it make him change his mind about anything, would he then believe that Jews were human beings? No, I would do nothing to him if he were in my power except kill him so he couldn’t hurt others. But I’m not so sure that killing him would mean he’d stay dead. Not here.”

“You’re a real Christian,” Frigate said, grinning.

“I thought you were my friend!” Ruach said.
This was the second time that Burton had heard the name Hitler. He intended to find out all about him, but at the moment everybody would have to put off talking to finish the roofs on the huts. They all pitched in, cutting off more grass with the little scissors they had found in their grails, or climbing the irontrees and tearing off the huge triangular green and scarlet-laced leaves. The roofs left much to be desired. Burton meant to search around for a professional thatcher and learn the proper techniques. The beds would have to be, for the time being, piles of grass on top of which were piles of softer irontree leaves. The blankets would be another pile of the same leaves.

"Thank God, or Whoever, that there is no insect life," Burton said.

He lifted the gray metal cup which still held two ounces of the best scotch he had ever tasted.

"Here's to Whoever. If he had raised us just to live
on an exact duplicate of Earth, we’d be sharing our beds with ten thousand kinds of biting, scratching, stinging, scraping, tickling, bloodsucking vermin.”

They drank, and then they sat around the fire for a while and smoked and talked. The shadow darkened, the sky lost its blue, and the gigantic stars and great sheets, which had been dimly seen ghosts just before dusk, blossomed out. The sky was indeed a blaze of glory.

“Like a Sime illustration,” Frigate said.

Burton did not know what a Sime was. Half of the conversation with the non-nineteenth-centurians consisted of them explaining their references and he explaining his.

Burton rose and went over to the other side of the fire and squatted by Alice. She had just returned from putting the little girl, Gwenafra, to bed in a hut.

Burton held out a stick of gum to Alice and said, “I just had half a piece. Would you care for the other half?”

She looked at him without expression and said, “No, thanks.”
“There are eight huts,” he said. “There isn’t any doubt about who is sharing which hut with whom, except for Wilfreda, you, and me.”

“I don’t think there’s any doubt about that,” she said.

“Then you’re sleeping with Gwenafra?”

She kept her face turned away from him. He squatted for a few seconds and then got up and went back to the other side and sat down by Wilfreda.

“You can move on, Sir Richard,” she said. Her lip was curled. “Lord grab me, I don’t like being second choice. You could of asked ’er where nobody could of seen you. I got some pride, too.”

He was silent for a minute. His first impulse had been to lash out at her with a sharp-pointed insult. But she was right. He had been too contemptuous of her. Even if she had been a whore, she had a right to be treated as a human being. Especially since she maintained that it was hunger that had driven her to prostitution, though he had been skeptical about that. Too many prostitutes had to rationalize their profession; too many had justifying fantasies about their entrance into the business. Yet, her rage at Smithson and her behavior toward him
indicated that she was sincere.

He stood up and said, “I didn’t mean to hurt your feelings.”

“Are you in love with her?” Wilfreda said, looking up at him.

“I’ve only told one woman that I ever loved her,” he said.

“Your wife?”

“No. The girl died before I could marry her.”

“And how long was you married?”

“Twenty-nine years, though it’s none of your business.”

“Lord grab me! All that time, and you never once told her you loved her!”

“It wasn’t necessary,” he said, and walked away.

The hut he chose was occupied by Monat and Kazz. Kazz was snoring away; Monat was leaning on his elbow and smoking a marijuana stick. Monat preferred that to tobacco, because it tasted more like his native tobacco. However, he got little effect from it. On the other hand, tobacco sometimes gave him fleeting but
vividly colored visions.

Burton decided to save the rest of his dreamgum, as he called it. He lit up a cigarette, knowing that marijuana would probably make his rage and frustration even darker. He asked Monat questions about his home, Ghuurrkh. He was intensely interested, but the marijuana betrayed him, and he drifted away while the Cetan’s voice became fainter and fainter.

“….cover your eyes now, boys!” Gilchrist said in his broad Scots speech.

Richard looked at Edward; Edward grinned and put his hands over his eyes, but he was surely peeking through the spaces between his fingers. Richard placed his own hands over his eyes and continued to stand on tiptoe. Although he and his brother were standing on boxes, they still had to stretch to see over the heads of the adults in front of them.

The woman’s head was in the stock by now; her long brown hair had fallen over her face. He wished he could see her expression as she stared down at the basket waiting for her, or for her head, rather.
“Don’t peek now, boys!” Gilchrist said again.

There was a roll of drums, a single shout, and the blade raced downward, and then a concerted shout from the crowd, mingled with some screams and moans, and the head fell down. The neck spurted out blood and would never stop. It kept spurting and spurting while the sun gleamed on it, it spurted out and covered the crowd and, though he was at least fifty yards from her, the blood struck him in the hands and seeped down between his fingers and over his face, filling his eyes and blinding him and making his lips sticky and salty. He screamed...

“Wake up, Dick!” Monat was saying. He was shaking Burton by the shoulder. “Wake up! You must have been having a nightmare!”

Burton, sobbing and shivering, sat up. He rubbed his hands and then felt his face. Both were wet. But with perspiration, not with blood.

“I was dreaming,” he said. “I was just six years old and in the city of Tours. In France, where we were living then. My tutor, John Gilchrist, took me and my brother Edward to see the execution of a woman who
had poisoned her family. It was a *treat*, Gilchrist said.

“\[quote\]I was excited, and I peeked through my fingers when he told us not to watch the final seconds, when the blade of the guillotine came down. But I did; I had to. I remember getting a little sick at my stomach but that was the only effect the gruesome scene had on me. I seemed to have dislocated myself while I was watching it; it was as if I saw the whole thing through a thick glass, as if it were unreal. Or I was unreal. So I wasn’t really horrified.”\[quote\]

Monat had lit another marijuana. Its light was enough so that Burton could see him shaking his head. “\[quote\]How savage! You mean that you not only killed your criminals, you cut their heads off! In public! And you allowed children to see it!\[quote\]

“They were a little more humane in England,” Burton said. “They hung the criminals!”

“At least the French permitted the people to be fully aware that they were spilling the blood of their criminals,” Monat said. “The blood was on their hands. But apparently this aspect did not occur to anyone. Not consciously, anyway. So now, after how many years—
sixty-three?—you smoke some marijuana and you relive an incident which you had always believed did not harm you. But, this time, you recoil with horror. You screamed like a frightened child. You reacted as you should have reacted when you were a child. I would say that the marijuana dug away some deep layers of repression and uncovered the horror that had been buried there for sixty-three years.”

“Perhaps,” Burton said.

He stopped. There was thunder and lightning in the distance. A minute later, a rushing sound came, and then the patter of drops on the roof. It had rained about this time last night, about three in the morning, he would guess. And this second night, it was raining about the same time. The downpour became heavy, but the roof had been packed tightly, and no water dripped down through it. Some water did, however, come under the back wall, which was uphill. It spread out over the floor but did not wet them, since the grass and leaves under them formed a mat about ten inches thick.

Burton talked with Monat until the rain ceased approximately half an hour later. Monat fell asleep;
Kazz had never awakened. Burton tried to get back to sleep but could not. He had never felt so alone, and he was afraid that he might slip back into the nightmare. After a while, he left the hut and walked to the one which Wilfreda had chosen. He smelled the tobacco before he got to the doorway. The tip of her cigarette glowed in the dark. She was a dim figure sitting upright in the pile of grass and leaves.

“Hello,” she said. “I was hoping you would come.”

“It’s the instinct to own property,” Burton said.

“I doubt that it’s an instinct in man,” Frigate said. “Some people in the ’60s—1960s, that is—tried to demonstrate that man had an instinct which they called the **territorial imperative**. But….”

“I like that phrase. It has a fine ring to it,” Burton said.

“I knew you’d like it,” Frigate said. “But Ardrey and others tried to prove that man not only had an instinct to claim a certain area of land as his own, he also was descended from a killer ape. And the instinct to kill was
still strong in his heritage from the killer ape. Which explained national boundaries, patriotism both national and local, capitalism, war, murder, crime, and so forth. But the other school of thought, or of the temperamental inclination, maintained that all these are the results of culture, of the cultural continuity of societies dedicated from earliest times to tribal hostilities, to war, to murder, to crime, and so forth. Change the culture, and the killer ape is missing. Missing because he was never there, like the little man on the stairs. The killer was the society, and society bred the new killers out of every batch of babies. But there were some societies, composed of preliterates, it is true, but still societies, that did not breed killers. And they were proof that man was not descended from a killer ape. Or I should say, he was perhaps descended from the ape but he did not carry the killing genes any longer, any more than he carried the genes for a heavy supraorbital ridge or hairy skin or thick bones or a skull with only 650 cubic centimeters capacity.”

“That is all very interesting,” Burton said. “We’ll go into the theory more deeply at another time. Let me point out to you, however, that almost every member of
resurrected humanity comes from a culture which encouraged war and murder and crime and rape and robbery and madness. It is these people among whom we are living and with whom we have to deal. There may be a new generation someday. I don’t know. It’s too early to say, since we’ve only been here for seven days. But, like it or not, we are in a world populated by beings who quite often act as if they were killer apes.

“In the meantime, let’s get back to our model.”

They were sitting on bamboo stools before Burton’s hut. On a little bamboo table in front of them was a model of a boat made from pine and bamboo. It had a double hull across the top of which was a platform with a low railing in the center. It had a single mast, very tall, with a fore-and-aft rig, a balloon jib sail, and a slightly raised bridge with a wheel. Burton and Frigate had used chert knives and the edge of the scissors to carve the model of the catamaran. Burton had decided to name the boat, when it was built, The Hadji. It would be going on a pilgrimage, though its goal was not Mecca. He intended to sail it up The River as far as it would go. (By now, the river had become The River.)
The two had been talking about the *territorial imperative* because of some anticipated difficulties in getting the boat built. By now the people in this area were somewhat settled. They had staked out their property and constructed their dwellings or were still working on them. These ranged all the way from lean-tos to relatively grandiose buildings that would be made of bamboo logs and stone, have four rooms, and be two stories high. Most of them were near the grailstones along The River and at the base of the mountain. Burton’s survey, completed two days before, resulted in an estimate of about 260 to 261 people per square mile. For every square mile of flat plain on each side of The River, there were approximately 2.4 square miles of hills. But the hills were so high and irregular that their actual inhabitable area was about nine square miles. In the three areas that he had studied, he found that about one-third had built their dwellings close to the Riverside grailstones and one-third around the inland grailstones. Two hundred and sixty-one persons per square mile seemed like a heavy population, but the hills were so heavily wooded and convoluted in topography that a small group living there could feel isolated. And the
plain was seldom crowded except at mealtimes, because the plains people were in the woods or fishing along the edge of The River. Many were working on dugouts or bamboo boats with the idea of fishing in the middle of The River. Or, like Burton, of going exploring.

The stands of bamboo had disappeared, although it was evident that they would be quickly replaced. The bamboo had a phenomenal growth. Burton estimated that a fifty-foot-high plant could grow from start to finish in ten days.

His gang had worked hard and cut down all they thought they would need for the boat. But they wanted to keep thieves away, so they used more wood to erect a high fence. This was being finished the same day that the model was completed. The trouble was that they would have to build the boat on the plain. It could never be gotten through the woods and down the various hills if it were built on this site.

"Yeah, but if we move out and set up a new base, we’ll run into opposition," Frigate had said. "There isn’t a square inch of the high-grass border that isn’t claimed."
As it is, you have to trespass to get to the plain. So far, nobody has tried to be hard-nosed about their property rights, but this can change any day. And if you build the ship a little back from the high-grass border, you can get it out of the woods okay and between the huts. But you’d have to set up a guard night and day, otherwise your stuff will be stolen. Or destroyed. You know these barbarians.”

He was referring to the huts wrecked while their owners were away and to the fouling of the pools below the cataract and the spring. He was also referring to the highly unsanitary habits of many of the locals. These would not use the little outhouses put up by various people for the public.

“We’ll erect new houses and a boatyard as close to the border as we can get,” Burton said. “Then we’ll chop down any tree that gets in our way and we’ll ram our way past anybody who refuses us right-of-way.”

It was Alice who went down to some people who had huts on the border between the plain and the hills and talked them into making a trade. She did not tell anybody what she intended. She had known of three
couples who were unhappy with their location because of lack of privacy. These made an agreement and moved into the huts of Burton’s gang on the twelfth day after Resurrection, on a Thursday. By a generally agreed upon convention, Sunday, the first, was Resurrection Day. Ruach said he would prefer that the first day be called Saturday, or even better, just First Day. But he was in an area predominantly Gentile—or ex-Gentile (but once a Gentile always a Gentile)—so he would go along with the others. Ruach had a bamboo stick on which he kept count of the days by notching it each morning. The stick was driven into the ground before his hut.

Transferring the lumber for the boat took four days of heavy work. By then, the Italian couples decided that they had had enough of working their fingers to the bone. After all, why get on a boat and go someplace else when every place was probably just like this? They had obviously been raised from the dead so they could enjoy themselves. Otherwise, why the liquor, the cigarettes, the marihuana, the dreamgum, and the nudity?

They left without ill feelings on the part of anybody; in
fact, they were given a going-away party. The next day, the twentieth of Year 1, A.R., two events occurred, one of which solved one puzzle and the other of which added one, though it was not very important.

The group went across the plain to the grailstone at dawn. They found two new people near the grailstone, both of them sleeping. They were easily aroused, but they seemed alarmed and confused. One was a tall brown-skinned man who spoke an unknown language. The other was a tall, handsome, well-muscled man with gray eyes and black hair. His speech was unintelligible until Burton suddenly understood that he was speaking English. It was the Cumberland dialect of the English spoken during the reign of King Edward I, sometimes called *Longshanks*. Once Burton and Frigate had mastered the sounds and made certain transpositions, they were able to carry on a halting conversation with him. Frigate had an extensive reading vocabulary of Early Middle English, but he had never encountered many of the words or certain grammatical usages.

John de Greystock was born in the manor of Greystoke in the Cumberland country. He had accompanied Edward I into France when the king
invaded Gascony. There he had distinguished himself in arms, if he was to be believed. Later, he was summoned to Parliament as Baron Greystoke and then again went to the wars in Gascony. He was in the retinue of Bishop Anthony Bec, Patriarch of Jerusalem. In the 28th and 29th years of Edward’s reign, he fought against the Scots. He died in 1305, without children, but he settled his manor and barony on his cousin, Ralph, son of Lord Grimthorpe in Yorkshire.

He had been resurrected somewhere along The River among a people about ninety percent early fourteenth-century English and Scottish and ten percent ancient Sybarites. The peoples across The River were a mixture of Mongols of the time of Kubla Khan and some dark people the identity of which Greystoke did not know. His description fitted North American Indians.

The nineteenth day after Resurrection, the savages across The River had attacked. Apparently they did so for no other reason than they wanted a good fight, which they got. The weapons were mostly sticks and grails, because there was little stone in the area. John de Greystoke put ten Mongols out of commission with his
grail and then was hit on the head with a rock and stabbed with the fire-hardened tip of a bamboo spear. He awoke, naked, with only his grail—or a grail—by this grailstone.

The other man told his story with signs and pantomime. He had been fishing when his hook was taken by something so powerful that it pulled him into the water. Coming back up, he had struck his head on the bottom of the boat and drowned.

The question of what happened to those who were killed in the afterlife was answered. Why they were not raised in the same areas as in which they died was another question.

The second event was the failure of the grails to deliver the noonday meal. Instead, crammed inside the cylinders were six cloths. These were of various sizes and of many different colors, hues, and patterns. Four were obviously designed to be worn as kilts. They could be fastened around the body with magnetic tabs inside the cloth. Two were of thinner almost transparent material and obviously made as brassieres, though they could be used for other purposes. Though the cloth was
soft and absorbent, it stood up under the roughest treatment and could not be cut by the sharpest chert or bamboo knife.

Mankind gave a collective whoop of delight on finding these “towels.” Though men and women had by then become accustomed, or at least resigned, to nudity, the more aesthetic and the less adaptable had found the universal spectacle of human genitalia unbeautiful or even repulsive. Now, they had kilts and bras and turbans. The latter were used to cover up their heads while their hair was growing back in. Later, turbans became a customary headgear.

Hair was returning everywhere except on the face.

Burton was bitter about this. He had always taken pride in his long mustachios and forked beard; he claimed that their absence made him feel more naked than the lack of trousers.

Wilfreda had laughed and said, “I’m glad they’re gone. I’ve always hated hair on men’s faces. Kissing a man with a beard was like sticking my face in a bunch of broken bedsprings.”
Sixty days had passed. The boat had been pushed across the plain on big bamboo rollers. The day of the launching had arrived. *The Hadji* was about forty feet long and essentially consisted of two sharp-prowed bamboo hulls fastened together with a platform, a bowsprit with a balloon sail and a single mast, fore-and-aft rigged, with sails of woven bamboo fibers. It was steered by a great oar of pine, since a rudder and steering wheel were not practicable. Their only material for ropes at this time was the grass, though it would not be long before leather ropes would be made from the tanned skin and entrails of some of the larger river fish. A dugout fashioned by Kazz from a pine log was tied down to the foredeck.

Before they could get it into the water, Kazz made some difficulties. By now, he could speak a very broken and limited English and some oaths in Arabic, Baluchi, Swahili, and Italian, all learned from Burton.
“Must need…wacha call it?…wallah!…what it word?…kill somebody before place boat on river…you know…merda…need word, Burton-naq…you give, Burton-naq…word…word…kill man so god, Kabburqanaqruebemss…water god…no sink boat…get angry…drown us…eat us.”

“Sacrifice?” Burton said.

“Many bloody thanks, Burton-naq. Sacrifice! Cut throat…put on boat…rub it on wood…then water god not mad at us….”

“We don’t do that,” Burton said.

Kazz argued but finally agreed to get on the boat. His face was long, and he looked very nervous. Burton, to ease him, told him that this was not Earth. It was a different world, as he could see at a quick glance around him and especially at the stars. The gods did not live in this valley. Kazz listened and smiled, but he still looked as if he expected to see the hideous green-bearded face and bulging fishy eyes of Kabburqanaqruebemss rising from the depths.

The plain was crowded around the boat that morning. Everybody was there for many miles around,
since anything out of the usual was entertainment. They shouted and laughed and joked. Though some of the comments were derisive, all were in good humor. Before the boat was rolled off the bank into The River, Burton stood up on its “bridge,” a slightly raised platform, and held up his hand for silence. The crowd’s chatter died away, and he spoke in Italian.

“Fellow lazari, friends, dwellers in the valley of the Promised Land! We leave you in a few minutes….”

“If the boat doesn’t capsize!” Frigate muttered.

“. . . to go up The River, against the wind and the current. We take the difficult route because the difficult always yields the greatest reward, if you believe what the moralists on Earth told us, and you know now how much to believe them!”

Laughter. With scowls here and there from die-hard religionists.

“On Earth, as some of you may know, I once led an expedition into deepest and darkest Africa to find the headwaters of the Nile. I did not find them, though I came close, and I was cheated out of the rewards by a man who owed everything to me, a Mr. John Hanning
Speke. If I should encounter him on my journey upriver, I will know how to deal with him. . . ."

"Good God!" Frigate said. "Would you have him kill himself again with remorse and shame?"

"...but the point is that this River may be one far, far greater than any Nile, which as you may or may not know, was the longest river on Earth, despite the erroneous claims of Americans for their Amazon and Missouri-Mississippi complexes. Some of you have asked why we should set out for a goal that lies we know not how far away or that might not even exist. I will tell you that we are setting sail because the Unknown exists and we would make it the Known. That's all! And here, contrary to our sad and frustrating experience on Earth, money is not required to outfit us or to keep us going. King Cash is dead, and good riddance to him! Nor do we have to fill out hundreds of petitions and forms and beg audiences of influential people and minor bureaucrats to get permission to pass up The River. There are no national borders...."

"...as yet," Frigate said.

"...nor passports required nor officials to bribe. We
just build a boat without having to obtain a license, and we sail off without a by-your-leave from any muckamuck, high, middle, or low. We are free for the first time in man’s history. Free! And so we bid you adieu, for I will not say good-bye...."

"....you never would," Frigate muttered.

"....because we may be back a thousand years or so from now! So I say adieu, the crew says adieu, we thank you for your help in building the boat and for your help in launching us. I hereby hand over my position as Her British Majesty’s Consul at Trieste to whomever wishes to accept it and declare myself to be a free citizen of the world of The River! I will pay tribute to none, owe fealty to none; to myself only will I be true!"

"Do what thy manhood bids thee do, from none but self expect applause;

"He noblest lives and noblest dies who makes and keeps his self-made laws," Frigate chanted.

Burton glanced at the American but did not stop his
speech. Frigate was quoting lines from Burton's poem, *The Kasidah of Haji Abdu Al-Yazdi*. It was not the first time that he had quoted from Burton's prose or poetry. And though Burton sometimes found the American to be irritating, he could not become too angry at a man who had admired him enough to memorize his words.

A few minutes later, when the boat was pushed into The River by some men and women and the crowd was cheering, Frigate quoted him again. He looked at the thousands of handsome youths by the waters, their skins bronzed by the sun, their kilts and bras and turbans wind-moving and colorful, and he said,

"Ah! gay the day with shine of sun, and bright the breeze,
and blithe the throng

"Met on the River-bank to play, when I was young, when I was young."

The boat slid out, and its prow was turned by the wind and the current downstream, but Burton shouted
orders, and the sails were pulled up, and he turned the great handle of the paddle so that the nose swung around and then they were beating to windward. The Hadji rose and fell in the waves, the water hissing as it was cut by the twin prows. The sun was bright and warm, the breeze cooled them off; they felt happy but also a little anxious as the familiar banks and faces faded away. They had no maps nor travelers’ tales to guide them; the world would be created with every mile forward.

That evening, as they made their first beaching, an incident occurred that puzzled Burton. Kazz had just stepped ashore among a group of curious people, when he became very excited. He began to jabber in his native tongue and tried to seize a man standing near. The man fled and was quickly lost in the crowd.

When asked by Burton what he was doing, Kazz said, “He not got...uh...whacha call it?...it....” and he pointed at his forehead. Then he traced several unfamiliar symbols in the air. Burton meant to pursue the matter, but Alice, suddenly wailing, ran up to a man. Evidently, she had thought he was a son who had been killed in World War I. There was some confusion. Alice
admitted that she had made a mistake. By then, other business came up. Kazz did not mention the matter again, and Burton forgot about it. But he was to remember.

Exactly 415 days later, they had passed 24,900 grailrocks on the right bank of The River. Tacking, running against wind and current, averaging sixty miles a day, stopping during the day to charge their grails and at night to sleep, sometimes stopping all day so they could stretch their legs and talk to others besides the crew, they had journeyed 24,900 miles. On Earth, that distance would have been about once around the equator. If the Mississippi-Missouri, Nile, Congo, Amazon, Yangtze, Volga, Amur, Hwang, Lena, and Zambezi had been put end to end to make one great river, it still would not have been as long as that stretch of The River they had passed. Yet The River went on and on, making great bends, winding back and forth. Everywhere were the plains along the stream, the tree-covered hills behind, and, towering, impassable, unbroken, the mountain range.

Occasionally, the plains narrowed, and the hills advanced to The River-edge. Sometimes, The River
widened and became a lake, three miles, five miles, six miles across. Now and then, the line of the mountains curved in toward each other, and the boat shot through canyons where the narrow passage forced the current to boil through and the sky was a blue thread far far above and the black walls pressed in on them.

And, always, there was humankind. Day and night, men, women, and children thronged the banks of The River and in the hills were more.

By then, the sailors recognized a pattern. Humanity had been resurrected along The River in a rough chronological and national sequence. The boat had passed by the area that held Slovenes, Italians, and Austrians who had died in the last decade of the nineteenth century, had passed by Hungarians, Norwegians, Finns, Greeks, Albanians, and Irish. Occasionally, they put in at areas which held peoples from other times and places. One was a twenty-mile stretch containing Australian aborigines who had never seen a European while on Earth. Another hundred-mile length was populated by Tocharians (Loghu’s people). These had lived around the time of Christ in what later became Chinese Turkestan. They represented the
easternmost extension of Indo-European speakers in ancient times; their culture had flourished for a while, then died before the encroachment of the desert and invasions of barbarians.

Through admittedly hasty and uncertain surveys, Burton had determined that each area was, in general, comprised of about 60 percent of a particular nationality and century, 30 percent of some other people, usually from a different time, and 10 percent from any time and place.

All men had awakened from death circumcised. All women had been resurrected as virgins. For most women, Burton commented, this state had not lasted beyond the first night on this planet.

So far, they had neither seen nor heard of a pregnant woman. Whoever had placed them here must have sterilized them, and with good reason. If mankind could reproduce, the Rivervalley would be jammed solid with bodies within a century.

At first, there had seemed to be no animal life but man. Now it was known that several species of worms emerged from the soil at night. And The River contained
at least a hundred species of fish, ranging from creatures six inches long to the sperm whale-sized fish, the "riverdragon," which lived on the bottom of The River a thousand feet down. Frigate said that the animals were there for a good purpose. The fish scavenged to keep The River waters clean. Some types of worm ate waste matter and corpses. Other types served the normal function of earthworms.

Gwenafra was a little taller. All the children were growing up. Within twelve years, there would not be an infant or adolescent within the valley, if conditions everywhere conformed to what the voyagers had so far seen.

Burton, thinking of this, said to Alice, "This Reverend Dodgson friend of yours, the fellow who loved only little girls. He'll be in a frustrating situation then, won't he?"

"Dodgson was no pervert," Frigate said. "But what about those whose only sexual objects are children? What will they do when there are no more children? And what will those who got their kicks by mistreating or torturing animals do? You know, I've regretted the absence of animals. I love cats and dogs, bears,
elephants, most animals. Not monkeys, they’re too much like humans. But I’m glad they’re not here. They can’t be abused now. All the poor helpless animals who were in pain or going hungry or thirsty because of some thoughtless or vicious human being. Not now.”

He patted Gwenafra’s blond hair which was almost six inches long.

“I felt much the same about the helpless and abused little ones, too.”

“What kind of a world is it that doesn’t have children,” Alice said. “For that matter, what kind without animals? If they can’t be mistreated or abused any more, they can’t be petted and loved.”

“One thing balances out another in this world,” Burton said. “You can’t have love without hate, kindness without malice, peace without war. In any event, we don’t have a choice in the matter. The invisible Lords of this world have decreed that we do not have animals and that women no longer bear children. So be it.”

The morning of the 416th day of their journey was like every morning. The sun had risen above the top of
the range on their left. The wind from upRiver was an estimated fifteen miles per hour, as always. The warmth rose steadily with the sun and would reach the estimated 85 degrees Fahrenheit at approximately two in the afternoon. The catamaran, *The Hadji*, tacked back and forth. Burton stood on the “bridge” with both hands on the long thick pine tiller on his right, while the wind and the sun beat on his darkly tanned skin. He wore a scarlet and black checked kilt reaching almost to his knees and a necklace made of the convoluted shiny-black vertebrae of the hornfish. This was a six-foot-long fish with a six-inch-long horn that projected unicornlike from its forehead. The hornfish lived about a hundred feet below the surface and was brought in on a line with difficulty. But its vertebrae made beautiful necklaces; its skin, properly tanned, made sandals and armor and shields or could be worked into tough pliable ropes and belts. Its flesh was delicious. But the horn was the most valuable item. It tipped spears or arrows or went into a wood handle to make a stiletto.

On a stand near him, encased in the transparent bladder of a fish, was a bow. It was made of the curved bones protruding from the sides of the mouth of the
whale-sized dragonfish. When the ends of each had been cut so that one fitted into the other, a double recurved bow was the result. Fitted with a string from the gut of the dragonfish, this made a bow that only a very powerful man could fully draw. Burton had run across one forty days ago and offered its owner forty cigarettes, ten cigars, and thirty ounces of whiskey for it. The offer was turned down. So Burton and Kazz came back late that night and stole the bow. Or, rather, made a trade, since Burton felt compelled to leave his yew bow in exchange.

Since then, he had rationalized that he had every right to steal the bow. The owner had boasted that he had murdered a man to get the bow. So taking it from him was taking it from a thief and a killer. Nevertheless, Burton suffered from thrusts of conscience when he thought about it, which was not often.

Burton took *The Hadji* back and forth across the narrowing channel. For about five miles, The River had widened out to a three and a half mile broad lake, and now it was forming into a narrow channel less than half a mile across. The channel curved and disappeared between the walls of a canyon.
There the boat would creep along because it would be bucking an accelerated current and the space allowed for tacking was so limited. But he had been through similar straits many times and so was not apprehensive about this. Still, every time it happened, he could not help thinking of the boat as being reborn. It passed from a lake, a womb, through a tight opening and out into another lake. It was a bursting of waters in many ways, and there was always the chance of a fabulous adventure, of a revelation, on the other side.

The catamaran turned away from a grailstone, only twenty yards off. There were many people on the right-side plain, which was only half a mile across here. They shouted at the boat or waved or shook their fists or shouted obscenities, unheard but understood by Burton because of so many experiences. But they did not seem hostile; it was just that strangers were always greeted by the locals in a varied manner. The locals here were a short, dark-skinned, dark-haired, thin-bodied people. They spoke a language that Ruach said was probably proto-Hamite-Semitic. They had lived on Earth somewhere in North Africa or Mesopotamia when those countries had been much more fertile. They wore
the towels as kilts but the women went bare-breasted and used the “bras” as neckscarfs or turbans. They occupied the right bank for sixty grailstones, that is, sixty miles. The people before them had been strung out for eighty grailstones and had been tenth-century A.D. Ceylonese with a minority of pre-Columbian Mayans.


His statements were not too far-fetched. It did look as if the various peoples had been mixed up so that they might learn something from each other. In some cases, the alien groups had managed to create various social lubricants and lived in relative amity. In other cases, there was a slaughter of one side by the other, or a mutual near-extinction, or slavery, of the defeated.

For some time, after the resurrection, anarchy had been the usual rule. People had “milled around” and formed little groups for defense in very small areas. Then the natural leaders and power seekers had come to the front, and the natural followers had lined up behind the leaders of their choice—or the leaders’
choice, in many cases.

One of the several political systems that had resulted was that of "grail slavery." A dominant group in an area held the weaker prisoners. They gave the slave enough to eat because the grail of a dead slave became useless. But they took the cigarettes, the cigars, the marijuana, the dreamgum, the liquor, and the tastier food.

At least thirty times, The Hadji had started to put into a grailstone and had come close to being seized by grail slavers. But Burton and the others were on the alert for signs of slave states. Neighboring states often warned them. Twenty times, boats had put out to intercept them instead of trying to lure them ashore, and The Hadji had narrowly escaped being run down or boarded. Five times, Burton had been forced to turn back and sail downstream. His catamaran had always outrun the pursuers, who were reluctant to chase him outside their borders. Then The Hadji had sneaked back at night and sailed past the slavers.

A number of times, The Hadji had been unable to put into shore because the slave states occupied both banks for very long stretches. Then the crew went on
half-rations, or, if they were lucky, caught enough fish to fill their bellies.

The proto-Hamite-Semites of this area had been friendly enough after they were assured that the crew of *The Hadji* had no evil intentions. An eighteenth-century Muscovite had warned them that there were slave states on the other side of the channel. He did not know too much about them because of the precipitous mountains. A few boats had sailed through the channel and almost none had returned. Those that did brought news of evil men on the other side.

So *The Hadji* was loaded with bamboo shoots, dried fish, and supplies saved over a period of two weeks from the grails.

There was still about half an hour before the strait would be entered. Burton kept half his mind on his sailing and half on the crew. They were sprawled on the foredeck, taking in the sun or else sitting with their backs against the roofed coaming which they called the “fo’c’sle.”

John de Greystock was affixing the thin carved bones of a hornfish to the butt of an arrow. The bones served
quite well as feathers in a world where birds did not exist. Greystock, or Lord Greystoke, as Frigate insisted on calling him for some private self-amusing reason, was a good man in a fight or when hard work was needed. He was an interesting, if almost unbelievably vulgar, talker, full of anecdotes of the campaigns in Gascony and on the border, of his conquests of women, of gossip about Edward Longshanks, and of course, of information about his times. But he was also very hardheaded and narrow-minded in many things—from the viewpoint of a later age—and not overly clean. He claimed to have been very devout in Earthlife, and he probably told the truth, otherwise, he would not have been honored by being attached to the retinue of the Patriarch of Jerusalem. But, now that his faith had been discredited, he hated priests. And he was apt to drive any he met into a fury with his scorn, hoping that they would attack him. Some did, and he came close to killing them. Burton had cautiously reprimanded him for this (you did not speak harshly to de Greystock unless you wished to fight to the death with him), pointing out that when they were guests in a strange land, and immensely outnumbered by their hosts, they should act
as guests. De Greystock admitted that Burton was right, but he could not keep from baiting every priest he met. Fortunately, they were not often in areas where there were Christian priests. Moreover, there were very few of these who admitted that they had been such.

Beside him, talking earnestly, was his current woman, born Mary Rutherfurd in 1637, died Lady Warwickshire in 1674. She was English but of an age 300 years later than his, so there were many differences in their attitudes and actions. Burton did not give them much longer to stay together.

Kazz was sprawled out on the deck with his head in the lap of Fatima, a Turkish woman whom the Neanderthal had met forty days ago during a lunch stop. Fatima, as Frigate had said, seemed to be “hung up on hair.” That was his explanation for the obsession of the seventeenth-century wife of a baker of Ankara for Kazz. She found everything about him stimulating but it was the hairiness that sent her into ecstasies. Everybody was pleased about this, most of all Kazz. He had not seen a single female of his own species during their long trip, though he had heard about some. Most women shied away from him because of his hairy
and brutish appearance. He had had no permanent female companionship until he met Fatima.

Little Lev Ruach was leaning against the forward bulkhead of the fo’c’sle, where he was making a slingshot from the leather of a hornfish. A bag by his side contained about thirty stones picked up during the last twenty days. By his side, talking swiftly, incessantly exposing her long white teeth, was Esther Rodriguez. She had replaced Tanya, who had been henpecking Lev before *The Hadji* set off. Tanya was a very attractive and petite woman but she seemed unable to keep from “remodeling” her men; Lev found out that she had “remodeled” her father and uncle and two brothers and two husbands. She tried to do the same for, or to, Lev, usually in a loud voice so that other males in the neighborhood could benefit by her advice. One day, just as *The Hadji* was about to sail, Lev had jumped aboard, turned, and said, “Good-bye, Tanya. I can’t stand any more reforming from The Bigmouth from The Bronx. Find somebody else; somebody that’s perfect.”

Tanya had gasped, turned white, and then started screaming at Lev. She was still screaming, judging by
her mouth, long after *The Hadji* had sailed out of earshot. The others laughed and congratulated Lev, but he only smiled sadly. Two weeks later, in an area predominantly ancient Libyan, he met Esther, a fifteenth-century Sephardic Jewess.

“Why don’t you try your luck with a Gentile?” Frigate had said.

Lev had shrugged his narrow shoulders. “I have. But sooner or later you get into a big fight, and they lose their temper and call you a goddam kike. The same thing also happens with my Jewish women, but from them I can take it.”

“Listen, friend,” the American said. “There are billions of Gentiles along this river who’ve never heard of a Jew. They can’t be prejudiced. Try one of them.”

“I’ll stick to the evil I know.”

“You mean you’re stuck to it,” Frigate said.

Burton sometimes wondered why Ruach stayed with the boat. He had never made any more references to *The Jew, The Gypsy, and El Islam*, though he often questioned Burton about other aspects of his past. He was friendly enough but had a certain indefinable
reserve. Though small, he was a good man in a fight and he had been invaluable in teaching Burton judo, karate, and jukado. His sadness, which hung about him like a thin mist even when he was laughing, or making love, according to Tanya, came from mental scars. These resulted from his terrible experiences in concentration camps in Germany and Russia, or so he claimed. Tanya had said that Lev was born sad; he inherited all the genes of sorrow from the time when his ancestors sat down by the willows of Babylon.

Monat was another case of sadness, though he could come out of it fully at times. The Tau Cetan kept looking for one of his own kind, for one of the thirty males and females who had been torn apart by the lynch mob. He did not give himself much chance. Thirty in an estimated thirty-five to thirty-six billion strung out along a river that could be ten million miles long made it improbable that he would ever see even one. But there was hope.

Alice Hargreaves was sitting forward of the fo’c’sle, only the top of her head in his view, and looking at the people on the banks whenever the boat got close enough for her to make out individual faces. She was
searching for her husband, Reginald, and also for her three sons and for her mother and father and her sisters and brothers. For any dear familiar face. The implications were that she would leave the boat as soon as this happened. Burton had not commented on this. But he felt a pain in his chest when he thought of it. He wished that she would leave and yet he did not wish it. To get her out of sight would eventually be to get her out of his mind. It was inevitable. But he did not want the inevitable. He felt for her as he had for his Persian love, and to lose her, too, would be to suffer the same long-lived torture.

Yet he had never said a word about how he felt to her. He talked to her, jested with her, showed her a concern that he found galling because she did not return it, and, in the end, got her to relax when with him. That is, she would relax if there were others around. When they were alone, she tightened up.

She had never used the dreamgum since that first night. He had used it for a third time and then hoarded his share and traded it for other items. The last time he had chewed it, with the hope of an unusually ecstatic lovemaking with Wilfreda, he had been plunged back
into the horrible sickness of the “little irons,” the sickness that had almost killed him during his expedition to Lake Tanganyika. Speke had been in the nightmare, and he had killed Speke. Speke had died in a hunting “accident” which everybody had thought was a suicide even if they had not said so. Speke, tormented by remorse because he had betrayed Burton, had shot himself. But in the nightmare, he had strangled Speke when Speke bent over to ask him how he was. Then, just as the vision faded, he had kissed Speke’s dead lips.
Well, he had known that he had loved Speke at the same time that he hated him, justifiably hated him. But the knowledge of his love had been very fleeting and infrequent and it had not affected him. During the dreamgum nightmare, he had felt so horrified at the realization that love lay far beneath his hate that he had screamed. He awakened to find Wilfreda shaking him, demanding to know what had happened. Wilfreda had smoked opium or drunk it in her beer when on Earth, but here, after one session with dreamgum, she had been afraid to chew any more. Her horror came from seeing again the death of a younger sister from tuberculosis and, at the same time, reliving her first experience as a whore.

“It’s a strange psychedelic,” Ruach had told Burton. He had explained what the word meant. The discussion about that had gone on for a long time. “It seems to bring up traumatic incidents in a mixture of reality and symbolism. Not always. Sometimes it’s an aphrodisiac.
Sometimes, as they said, it takes you on a beautiful trip. But I would guess that dreamgum has been provided us for therapeutic, if not cathartic, reasons. It’s up to us to find out just how to use it.”

“Why don’t you chew it more often?” Frigate had said.

“For the same reason that some people refused to go into psychotherapy or quit before they were through; I’m afraid.”

“Yeah, me, too,” Frigate said. “But someday, when we stop off someplace for a long time, I’m going to chew a stick every night, so help me. Even if it scares the hell out of me. Of course, that’s easy to say now.”

Peter Jairus Frigate had been born only twenty-eight years after Burton had died, yet the world between them was wide. They saw so many things so differently; they would have argued violently if Frigate was able to argue violently. Not on matters of discipline in the group or in running the boat. But on so many matters of looking at the world. Yet, in many ways, Frigate was much like Burton, and it may have been this that had caused him to be so fascinated by Burton on Earth.
Frigate had picked up in 1938 a softcover book by Fairfax Downey titled *Burton: Arabian Nights’ Adventurer*. The front page illustration was of Burton at the age of fifty. The savage face, the high brow and prominent supraorbital ridges, the heavy black brows, the straight but harsh nose, the great scar on his cheek, the thick “sensual” lips, the heavy downdrooping moustache, the heavy forked beard, the essential broodingness and aggressiveness of the face, had caused him to buy the book.

“I’d never heard of you before, Dick,” Frigate said. “But I read the book at once and was fascinated. There was something about you, aside from the obvious derring-do of your life, your swordsmanship, mastery of many languages, disguises as a native doctor, native merchantman, as a pilgrim to Mecca, the first European to get out of the sacred city of Harar alive, discoverer of Lake Tanganyika and near-discoverer of the source of the Nile, cofounder of the Royal Anthropological Society, inventor of the term ESP, translator of the Arabian Nights, student of the sexual practices of the East, and so forth…

“Aside from all this, fascinating enough in itself, you
had a special affinity for me. I went to the public library—Peoria was a small city but had many books on you and about you, donated by some admirer of yours who’d passed on—and I read these. Then I started to collect first editions by you and about you. I became a fiction writer eventually, but I planned to write a huge definitive biography of you, travel everywhere you had been, take photographs and notes of these places, found a society to collect funds for the preservation of your tomb....”

This was the first time Frigate had mentioned his tomb. Burton, startled, said, “Where?” Then, “Oh, of course! Mortlake! I’d forgotten! Was the tomb really in the form of an Arab tent, as Isabel and I had planned?”

“Sure. But the cemetery was swallowed up in a slum, the tomb was defaced by vandals, there were weeds up to your tochis and talk of moving the bodies to a more remote section of England, though by then it was hard to find a really remote section.”

“And did you found your society and preserve my tomb?” Burton said.

He had gotten used to the idea by then of having
been dead, but to talk with someone who had seen his tomb made his skin chill for a moment.

Frigate took a deep breath. Apologetically, he said, “No. By the time I was in a position to do that, I would have felt guilty spending time and money on the dead. The world was in too much of a mess. The living needed all the attention they could get. Pollution, poverty, oppression, and so forth. These were the important things.”

“And that giant definitive biography?”

Again, Frigate spoke apologetically. “When I first read about you, I thought I was the only one deeply interested in you or even aware of you. But there was an upsurge of interest in you in the ’60s. Quite a few books were written about you and even one about your wife.”

“Isabel? Someone wrote a book about her? Why?”

Frigate had grinned. “She was a pretty interesting woman. Very aggravating, I’ll admit, pitifully superstitious and schizophrenic and self-fooling. Very few would ever forgive her for burning your manuscripts and your journals....”
“What?” Burton had roared. “Burn...?”

Frigate nodded and said, “What your doctor, Grenfell Baker, described as ‘the ruthless holocaust that followed his lamented death.’ She burned your translation of *The Perfumed Garden*, claiming you would not have wanted to publish it unless you needed the money for it, and you didn’t need it, of course, because you were now dead.”

Burton was speechless for one of the few times in his life.

Frigate looked out of the corner of his eye at Burton and grinned. He seemed to be enjoying Burton’s distress.

“Burning *The Perfumed Garden* wasn’t so bad, though bad enough. But to burn both sets of your journals, the private ones in which, supposedly, you let loose all your deepest thoughts and most burning hates, and even the public ones, the diary of daily events, well, I never forgave her! Neither did a lot of people. That was a great loss; only one of your notebooks, a small one, escaped, and that was burned during the bombing of London in World War II.”
He paused and said, “Is it true that you converted to the Catholic Church on your deathbed, as your wife claimed?”

“I may have,” Burton said. “Isabel had been after me for years to convert, though she never dared urge me directly. When I was so sick there, at the last, I may have told her I would do so in order to make her happy. She was so grief-stricken, so distressed, so afraid my soul would burn in Hell.”

“Then you did love her?” Frigate had said.

“I would have done the same for a dog,” Burton replied.

“For somebody who can be so upsettingly frank and direct, you can be very ambiguous at times.”

This conversation had taken place about two months after First Day, A.R. 1. The result had been something like that which Dr. Johnson would have felt on encountering another Boswell.

This had been the second stage of their curious relationship. Frigate became closer but, at the same time, more of an annoyance. The American had always been restrained in his comments on Burton’s attitudes,
undoubtedly because he did not want to anger him. Frigate made a very conscious effort not to anger anybody. But he also made unconscious efforts to antagonize them. His hostilities came out in many subtle, and some not so subtle, actions and words. Burton did not like this. He was direct, not at all afraid of anger. Perhaps, as Frigate pointed out, he was too eager for hostile confrontations.

One evening, as they were sitting around a fire under a grailstone, Frigate had spoken about Karachi. This village, which later became the capital of Pakistan, the nation created in 1947, had only two thousand population in Burton’s time. By 1970, its population was approximately twenty lakhs. That led to Frigate’s asking, rather indirectly, about the report Burton had made to his general, Sir Robert Napier, on houses of male prostitution in Karachi. The report was supposed to be kept in the secret files of the East India Army, but it was found by one of the many enemies of Burton. Though the report was never mentioned publicly, it had been used against him throughout his life. Burton had disguised himself as a native in order to get into the house and make observations that no European would
have been allowed to make. He had been proud that he had escaped detection, and he had taken the unsavory job because he was the only one who could do it and because his beloved leader, Napier, had asked him to.

Burton had replied to Frigate’s questions somewhat surlily. Alice had angered him earlier that day—she seemed to be able to do so very easily lately—and he was thinking of a way to anger her. Now he seized upon the opportunity given him by Frigate. He launched into an uninhibited account of what went on in the Karachi houses. Ruach finally got up and walked away. Frigate looked as if he were sick, but he stayed. Wilfreda laughed until she rolled on the ground. Kazz and Monat kept stolid expressions. Gwenafra was sleeping on the boat, so Burton did not have to take her into account. Loghu seemed to be fascinated but also slightly repulsed.

Alice, his main target, turned pale and then, later, red. Finally, she rose and said, “Really, Mr. Burton, I had thought you were low before. But to brag of this... this...you are utterly contemptible, degenerate, and repulsive. Not that I believe a word of what you’ve been telling me. I can’t believe that anybody would
behave as you claim you did and then boast about it. You are living up to your reputation as a man who likes to shock others no matter what damage it does to his own reputation.”

She had walked off into the darkness.

Frigate had said, “Sometime, maybe, you will tell me how much of that is true. I used to think as she did. But when I got older, more evidence about you was turned up, and one biographer made a psychoanalysis of you based on your own writing and various documentary sources.”

“And the conclusions?” Burton said mockingly.

“Later, Dick,” Frigate said. “Ruffian Dick,” he added, and he, too, left.

Now, standing at the tiller, watching the sun beat down on the group, listening to the hissing of water cut by the two sharp prows, and the creaking of rigging, he wondered what lay ahead on the other side of the canyonlike channel. Not the end of The River, surely. That would probably go on forever. But the end of the group might be near. They had been cooped up too long together. Too many days had been spent on the
narrow deck with too little to do except talk or help sail
the ship. They were rubbing each other raw and had
been doing it for a long time. Even Wilfreda had been
quiet and unresponsive lately. Not that he had been too
stimulating. Frankly, he was tired of her. He did not
hate her or wish her any ill. He was just tired of her, and
the fact that he could have her and not have Alice
Hargreaves made him even more tired of her.

Lev Ruach was staying away from him or speaking
as little as possible, and Lev was arguing even more
with Esther about his dietary habits and his daydreaming
and why didn’t he ever talk to her?

Frigate was mad at him about something. But Frigate
would never come out and say anything, the coward,
until he was driven into a corner and tormented into a
mindless rage. Loghu was angry and scornful of Frigate
because he was as sullen with her as with the others.
Loghu was also angry with him, Burton, because he had
turned her down when they had been alone gathering
bamboo in the hills several weeks ago. He had told her
no, adding that he had no moral scruples against making
love to her, but that he would not betray Frigate or any
other member of the crew. Loghu said that it was not
that she did not love Frigate; it was just that she needed a change now and then. Just as Frigate did.

Alice had said that she was about to give up hope of ever seeing anybody she knew again. They must have passed an estimated 44,370,000 people, at least, and not once had she seen anybody she had known on Earth. She had seen some that she had mistaken for old acquaintances. And she admitted that she had only seen a small percentage of the 44,370,000 at close range or even at far range. But that did not matter. She was getting abysmally depressed and weary of sitting on this cramped foredeck all day with her only exercise handling the tiller or the rigging or opening and closing her lips with conversation, most of it inane.

Burton did not want to admit it, but he was afraid that she might leave. She might just get off at the next stop, walk off onto the shore with her grail and few belongings, and say good-bye. See you in a hundred years or so. Perhaps. The chief thing keeping her on the boat so far had been Gwenafra. She was raising the little ancient Briton as a Victorian-lady-cum-post-Resurrection-mores-child. This was a most curious mixture, but not any more curious than anything else
Burton himself was weary of the eternal voyaging on the little vessel. He wanted to find some hospitable area and settle down there to rest, then to study, to engage in local activities, to get his land legs back, and allow the drive to get out and away to build up again. But he wanted to do it with Alice as his hutmate.

"The fortune of the man who sits also sits," he muttered. He would have to take action with Alice; he had been a gentleman long enough. He would woo her; he would take her by storm. He had been an aggressive lover when a young man, then he had gotten used to being the loved, not the lover, after he got married. And his old habit patterns, old neural circuits, were still with him. He was an old person in a new body.

_The Hadji_ entered the dark and turbulent channel. The blue-black rock walls rose on both sides and the boat went down a curve and the broad lake behind was lost. Everybody was busy then, jumping to handle the sails as Burton took _The Hadji_ back and forth in the quarter-mile-wide stream and against a current that raised high waves. The boat rose and dipped sharply
and heeled far over when they changed course abruptly. It often came within a few feet of the canyon walls, where the waves slapped massively against the rock. But he had been sailing the boat so long that he had become a part of it, and his crew had worked with him so long that they could anticipate his orders, though they never acted ahead of them.

The passage took about thirty minutes. It caused anxiety in some—no doubt of Frigate and Ruach being worried—but it also exhilarated all of them. The boredom and the sullenness were, temporarily, at least, gone.

*The Hadji* came out into the sunshine of another lake. This was about four miles wide and stretched northward as far as they could see. The mountains abruptly fell away; the plains on both sides resumed the usual mile width.

There were fifty or so craft in view, ranging from pine dugouts to two-masted bamboo boats. Most of them seemed to be engaged in fishing. To the left, a mile away, was the ubiquitous grailstone, and along the shore were dark figures. Behind them, on the plain and
hills, were bamboo huts in the usual style of what Frigate called Neo-Polynesian or, sometimes, Post-Mortem Riparian Architecture.

On the right, about half a mile from the exit of the canyon, was a large log fort. Before it were ten massive log docks with a variety of large and small boats. A few minutes after *The Hadji* appeared, drums began beating. These could be hollow logs or drums made with tanned fish skin or human skin. There was already a crowd in front of the fort, but a large number swarmed out of it and from a collection of huts behind it. They piled into the boats, and these cast off.

On the left bank, the dark figures were launching dugouts, canoes, and single-masted boats.

It looked as if both shores were sending boats out in a competition to seize *The Hadji* first.

Burton took the boat back and forth as required, cutting in between the other boats several times. The men on the right were closer; they were white and well-armed, but they made no effort to use their bows. A man standing in the prow of a warcanoe with thirty paddlers shouted at them, in German, to surrender.
“You will not be harmed!”

“We come in peace!” Frigate bawled at him.

“He knows that!” Burton said. “It’s evident that we few aren’t going to attack them!”

Drums were beating on both sides of The River now. It sounded as if the lake shores were alive with drums. And the shores were certainly alive with men, all armed. Other boats were being put out to intercept them. Behind them, the boats that had first gone out were pursuing but losing distance.

Burton hesitated. Should he bring *The Hadji* around and go back through the channel and then return at night? It would be a dangerous maneuver, because the twenty thousand-foot-high walls would block out the light from the blazing stars and gas sheets. They would be almost blind.

And this craft did seem to be faster than anything the enemy had. So far, that is. Far in the distance, tall sails were coming swiftly toward him. Still, they had the wind and current behind them, and if he avoided them, could they outstrip him when they, too, had to tack?

All the vessels he had seen so far had been loaded
with men, thus slowing them down. Even a boat that had the same potentialities as *The Hadji* would not keep up with her if she were loaded with warriors.

He decided to keep on running up River.

Ten minutes later, as he was running close-hauled, another large warcanoe cut across his path. This held sixteen paddlers on each side and supported a small deck in the bow and the stern. Two men stood on each deck beside a catapult mounted on a wooden pedestal. The two in the bow placed a round object which sputtered smoke in the pocket of the catapult. One pulled the catch, and the arm of the machine banged against the crossbeam. The canoe shuddered, and there was a slight halt in the deep rhythmic grunting of the paddlers. The smoking object flew in a high arc until it was about twenty feet in front of *The Hadji* and ten feet above the water. It exploded with a loud noise and much black smoke, quickly cleared away by the breeze.

Some of the women screamed, and a man shouted. He thought, there is sulfur in this area. Otherwise, they would not have been able to make gunpowder.
He called to Loghu and Esther Rodriguez to take over at the tiller. Both women were pale, but they seemed calm enough, although neither woman had ever experienced a bomb.

Gwenafra had been put inside the fo’c’sle. Alice had a yew bow in her hand and a quiver of arrows strapped to her back. Her pale skin contrasted shockingly with the red lipstick and the green eyelid-makeup. But she had been through at least ten running battles on the water, and her nerves were as steady as the chalk cliffs of Dover. Moreover, she was the best archer of the lot. Burton was a superb marksman with a firearm but he lacked practice with the bow. Kazz could draw the riverdragonhorn bow even deeper than Burton, but his marksmanship was abominable. Frigate claimed it would never be very good; like most preliterates, he lacked a development of the sense of perspective.

The catapult men did not fit another bomb to the machine. Evidently, the bomb had been a warning to stop. Burton intended to stop for nothing. Their pursuers could have shot them full of arrows several times. That they had refrained meant that they wanted The Hadji crew alive.
The canoe, water boiling from its prow, paddles flashing in the sun, paddlers grunting in unison, passed closely to the stern of *The Hadji*. The two men on the foredeck leaped outward, and the canoe rocked. One man splashed into the water, his fingertips striking the edge of the deck. The other landed on his knees on the edge. He gripped a bamboo knife between his teeth; his belt held two sheaths, one with a small stone axe and the other with a hornfish stiletto. For a second, as he tried to grab onto the wet planking and pull himself up, he stared upward into Burton’s eyes. His hair was a rich yellow, his eyes were a pale blue, and his face was classically handsome. His intention was probably to wound one or two of the crew and then to dive off, maybe with a woman in his arms. While he kept *The Hadji* crew busy, his fellows would sail up and engage *The Hadji* and pour aboard, and that would be that.

He did not have much chance of carrying out his plan, probably knew it, and did not care. Most men still feared death because the fear was in the cells of their bodies, and they reacted instinctively. A few had overcome their fear, and others had never really felt it.

Burton stepped up and banged the man on the side
of the head with his axe. The man’s mouth opened; the bamboo knife fell out; he collapsed facedown on the deck. Burton picked up the knife, untied the man’s belt, and shoved him off into the water with his foot. At that, a roar came from the men in the warcanoe, which was turning around. Burton saw that the shore was coming up fast, and he gave order to tack. The vessel swung around, and the boom swung by. Then they were beating across The River, with a dozen boats speeding toward them. Three were four-man dugouts, four were big warcanoes, and five were two-masted schooners. The latter held a number of catapults and many men on the decks.

Halfway across The River, Burton ordered *The Hadji* swung around again. The maneuver allowed the sailships to get much closer, but he had calculated for that. Now, sailing close-hauled again, *The Hadji* cut water between the two schooners. They were so close that he could clearly see the features of all aboard both craft. They were mostly Caucasian, though they ranged from very dark to Nordic pale. The captain of the boat on the portside shouted in German at Burton, demanding that he surrender.
"We will not harm you if you give up, but we will torture you if you continue to fight!"

He spoke German with an accent that sounded Hungarian.

For reply, Burton and Alice shot arrows. Alice’s shaft missed the captain but hit the helmsman, and he staggered back and fell over the railing. The craft immediately veered. The captain sprang to the wheel, and Burton’s second shaft went through the back of his knee.

Both schooners struck slantingly with a great crash and shot off with much tearing up of timbers, men screaming and falling onto the decks or falling overboard. Even if the boats did not sink, they would be out of action.

But just before they hit, their archers had put a dozen flaming arrows into the bamboo sails of The Hadji. The shafts carried dry grass which had been soaked with turpentine made from pine resin, and these, fanned by the wind, spread the flames quickly.

Burton took the tiller back from the women and shouted orders. The crew dipped fired-clay vessels and
their open grails into The River and then threw the water on the flames. Loghu, who could climb like a monkey, went up the mast with a rope around her shoulder. She let the rope down and pulled up the containers of water.

This permitted the other schooners and several canoes to draw close. One on a course which would put it directly in the path of *The Hadji*. Burton swung the boat around again, but it was sluggish because of Loghu’s weight on the mast. It wheeled around, the boom swung wildly as the men failed to keep control of its ropes, and more arrows struck the sail and spread more fire. Several arrows thunked into the deck. For a moment, Burton thought that the enemy had changed his mind and was trying to down them. But the arrows were just misdirected.

Again, *The Hadji* sliced between two schooners. The captains and the crew of both were grinning. Perhaps they had been bored for a long time and were enjoying the pursuit. Even so, the crews ducked behind the railings, leaving the officers, helmsmen, and the archers to receive the fire from *The Hadji*. There was a strumming, and dark streaks with red heads and blue
tails went halfway through the sails in two dozen places, a number drove into the mast or the boom, a dozen hissed into the water, one shot by Burton a few inches from his head.

Alice, Ruach, Kazz, de Greystock, Wilfreda, and he had shot while Esther handled the tiller. Loghu was frozen halfway up the mast, waiting until the arrow fire quit. The five arrows found three targets of flesh, a captain, a helmsman, and a sailor who stuck his head up at the wrong time for him.

Esther screamed, and Burton spun. The warcanoe had come out from behind the schooner and was a few feet in front of *The Hadji*’s bow. There was no way to avoid a collision. The two men on the platform were diving off the side, and the paddlers were standing up or trying to stand up so they could get overboard. Then *The Hadji* smashed into its port near the bow, cracking it open, turning it over, and spilling its crew into The River. Those on *The Hadji* were thrown forward, and de Grey-stock went into the water. Burton slid on his face and chest and knees, burning off the skin.

Esther had been torn from the tiller and rolled across
the deck until she thumped against the edge of the fo’c’lsle coaming. She lay there without moving.

Burton looked upward. The sail was blazing away beyond hope of being saved. Loghu was gone, so she must have been hurled off at the moment of impact. Then, getting up, he saw her and de Greystock swimming back to *The Hadji*. The water around them was boiling with the splashing of the dispossessed canoemen, many of whom, judging by their cries, could not swim.

Burton called to the men to help the two aboard while he inspected the damage. Both prows of the very thin twin hulls had been smashed open by the crash. Water was pouring inside. And the smoke from the burning sail and mast was curling around them, causing Alice and Gwenafra to cough.

Another warcanoe was approaching swiftly from the north; the two schooners were sailing close-hauled toward them.

They could fight and draw some blood from their enemies, who would be holding themselves back to keep from killing them. Or they could swim for it. Either
way, they would be captured.

Loghu and de Greystock were pulled aboard. Frigate reported that Esther could not be brought back to consciousness. Ruach felt her pulse and opened her eyes and then walked back to Burton.

“She’s not dead, but she’s totally out.”

Burton said, “You women know what will happen to you. It’s up to you, of course, but I suggest you swim down as deeply as you can and draw in a good breath of water. You’ll wake up tomorrow, good as new.”

Gwenafra had come out from the fo’c’sle. She wrapped her arms round his waist and looked up, dry-eyed but scared. He hugged her with one arm and then said, “Alice! Take her with you!”

“Where?” Alice said. She looked at the canoe and back at him. She coughed again as more smoke wrapped around her and then she moved forward, upwind.

“When you go down.”

He gestured at The River.

“I can’t do that,” she said.
“You wouldn’t want those men to get her, too. She’s only a little girl but they’ll not stop for that.”

Alice looked as if her face was going to crumple and wash away with tears. But she did not weep.

She said, “Very well. It’s no sin now, killing yourself. I just hope….”

He said, “Yes.”

He did not drawl the word; there was no time to drawl anything out. The canoe was within forty feet of them.

“The next place might be just as bad or worse than this one,” Alice said. “And Gwenafra will wake up all alone. You know that the chances of us being resurrected at the same place are slight.”

“That can’t be helped,” he said.

She clamped her lips, then opened them and said, “I’ll fight until the last moment. Then….”

“It may be too late,” he said. He picked up his bow and drew an arrow from his quiver. De Greystock had lost his bow, so he took Kazz’s. The Neanderthal placed a stone in a sling and began whirling it. Lev
picked up his sling and chose a stone for its pocket. Monat used Esther’s bow, since he had lost his, also.

The captain of the canoe shouted in German, “Lay down your arms! You won’t be harmed!”

He fell off the platform onto a paddler a second later as Alice’s arrow went through his chest. Another arrow, probably de Greystock’s, spun the second man off the platform and into the water. A stone hit a paddler in the shoulder, and he collapsed with a cry. Another stone struck glancingly off another paddler’s head, and he lost his paddle.

The canoe kept on coming. The two men on the aft platform urged the crew to continue driving toward The Hadji. Then they fell with arrows in them.

Burton looked behind him. The two schooners were letting their sails drop now. Evidently they would slide on up to The Hadji where the sailors would throw their grappling hooks into it. But if they got too close, the flames might spread to them.

The canoe rammed into The Hadji with fourteen of the original complement dead or too wounded to fight. Just before the canoe’s prow hit, the survivors dropped
their paddles and raised small round leather shields. Even so, two arrows went through two shields and into the arms of the men holding them. That still left twenty men against six men, five women, and a child.

But one was a five-foot-high hairy man with tremendous strength and a big stone axe. Kazz jumped into the air just before the canoe rammed the starboard hull and came down in it a second after it had halted. His axe crushed two skulls and then drove through the bottom of the canoe. Water poured in, and de Greystock, shouting something in his Cumberland Middle English, leaped down beside Kazz. He held a stiletto in one hand and a big oak club with flint spikes in the other.

The others on The Hadji continued to shoot their arrows. Suddenly, Kazz and de Greystock were scrambling back onto the catamaran and the canoe was sinking with its dead, dying, and its scared survivors. A number drowned; the others either swam away or tried to get aboard The Hadji. These fell back with their fingers chopped off or stamped flat.

Something struck on the deck near him and then
something else coiled around him. Burton spun and slashed at the leather rope which had settled around his neck. He leaped to one side to avoid another and yanked savagely at a third rope and pulled the man on the other end over the railing. The man, screaming, pitched out and struck the deck of The Hadji with his shoulder. Burton smashed in his face with his axe.

By now men were dropping from the decks of both schooners and ropes were falling everywhere. The smoke and the flames added to the confusion, though they may have helped The Hadji’s crew more than the boarders.

Burton shouted at Alice to get Gwenafra and jump into The River. He could not find her and then had to parry the thrust of a big black with a spear. The man seemed to have forgotten any orders to capture Burton; he looked as if he meant to kill. Burton knocked the short spear aside and whirled, lashing out as he went by with the axe and smashed its edge against the black’s neck. Burton continued to whirl, felt a sharp pain in his ribs, another in his shoulder, but knocked two men down and then was in the water. He fell between the schooner and The Hadji, went down, released the axe,
and pulled the stiletto from its sheath. When he came up, he was looking up at a tall, rawboned, redheaded man who was lifting the screaming Gwenafra above him with both hands. The man pitched her far out into the water.

Burton dived again and coming up saw Gwenafra’s face only a few feet before him. It was gray, and her eyes were dull. Then he saw the blood darkening the water around her. She disappeared before he could get to her. He dived down after her, caught her and pulled her back up. A hornfish tip was stuck into her back.

He let her body go. He did not know why the man had killed her when he could have easily taken her prisoner. Perhaps Alice had stabbed her and the man had figured that she was as good as dead and so had tossed her over the side to the fishes.

A body shot out of the smoke, followed by another. One man was dead with a broken neck; the other was alive. Burton wrapped his arm around the man’s neck and stabbed him at the juncture of jaw and ear. The man quit struggling and slipped down into the depths.

Frigate leaped out from the smoke, his face and
shoulders bloody. He hit the water at a slant and dived deep. Burton swam toward him to help him. There was no use even trying to get back on the craft. It was solid with struggling bodies, and other canoes and dugouts were closing in.

Frigate’s head rose out of the water. His skin was white where the blood was not pumping out over it. Burton swam to him and said, “Did the women get away?”

Frigate shook his head and then said, “Watch out!”

Burton upended to dive down. Something hit his legs; he kept on going down, but he could not carry out his intention of breathing in the water. He would fight until they had to kill him.

On coming up, he saw that the water was alive with men who had jumped in after him and Frigate. The American, half-conscious, was being towed to a canoe. Three men closed in on Burton, and he stabbed two and then a man in a dugout reached down with a club and banged him on the head.
They were led ashore near a large building behind a wall of pine logs. Burton’s head throbbed with pain at every step. The gashes in his shoulder and ribs hurt, but they had quit bleeding. The fortress was built of pine logs, had an overhanging second story, and many sentinels. The captives were marched through an entrance that could be closed with a huge log gate. They marched across sixty feet of grass-covered yard and through another large gateway into a hall about fifty feet long and thirty wide. Except for Frigate, who was too weak, they stood before a large round table of oak. They blinked in the dark and cool interior before they could clearly see the two men at the table.

Guards with spears, clubs, and stone axes were everywhere. A wooden staircase at one end of the hall led up to a runway with high railings. Women looked over the railings at them.

One of the men at the table was short and muscular.
He had a hairy body, black curly hair, a nose like a falcon's, and brown eyes as fierce as a falcon's. The second man was taller, had blond hair, eyes the exact color of which was difficult to tell in the dusky light but were probably blue, and a broad Teutonic face. A paunch and the beginnings of jowls told of the food and liquor he had taken from the grails of slaves.

Frigate had sat down on the grass, but he was pulled up to his feet when the blond gave a signal. Frigate looked at the blond and said, “You look like Hermann Göring when he was young.”

Then he dropped to his knees, screaming with pain from the impact of a spear butt over his kidneys.

The blond spoke in an English with a heavy German accent. “No more of that unless I order it. Let them talk.”

He scrutinized them for several minutes, then said, “Yes, I am Hermann Göring.”

“Who is Göring?” Burton said.

“Your friend can tell you later,” the German said. “If there is a later for you. I am not angry about the splendid fight you put up. I admire men who can fight
well. I can always use more spears, especially since you killed so many. I offer you a choice. You men, that is. Join me and live well with all the food, liquor, tobacco, and women you can possibly want. Or work for me as my slaves.”

“For us,” the other man said in English. “You forget, Hermann, dat I have yust as muck to say about dis as you.”

Göring smiled, chuckled, and said, “Of course! I was only using the royal I, you might say. Very well, we. If you swear to serve us, and it will be far better for you if you do, you will swear loyalty to me, Hermann Göring, and to the one-time king of ancient Rome, Tullius Hostilius.”

Burton looked closely at the man. Could he actually be the legendary king of ancient Rome? Of Rome when it was a small village threatened by the other Italic tribes, the Sabines, Aequi, and Volsci? Who, in turn, were being pressed by the Umbrians, themselves pushed by the powerful Etruscans? Was this really Tullius Hostilius, warlike successor to the peaceful Numa Pompilius? There was nothing to distinguish him
from a thousand men whom Burton had seen on the streets of Siena. Yet, if he was what he claimed to be, he could be a treasure trove, historically and linguistically speaking. He would, since he was probably Etruscan himself, know that language, in addition to pre-Classical Latin, and Sabine, and perhaps Campanian Greek. He might even have been acquainted with Romulus, supposed founder of Roma. What stories that man could tell!

“Well?” Göring said.

“What do we have to do if we join you?” Burton said.

“First, I...we...have to make sure that you are the caliber of man we want. In other words, a man who will unhesitatingly and immediately do anything that we order. We will give you a little test.”

He gave an order and a minute later, a group of men was brought forward. All were gaunt, and all were crippled.

“They were injured while quarrying stone or building our walls,” Göring said. “Except for two caught while trying to escape. They will have to pay the penalty. All
will be killed because they are now useless. So, you should not hesitate about killing them to show your determination to serve us.”

He added, “Besides, they are all Jews. Why worry about them?”

Campbell, the redhead who had thrown Gwenafra into The River, held out to Burton a large club studded with chert blades. Two guards seized a slave and forced him to his knees. He was a large blond with blue eyes and a Grecian profile; he glared at Göring and then spat at him.

Göring laughed. “He has all the arrogance of his race. I could reduce him to a quivering screaming mass begging for death if I wanted to. But I do not really care for torture. My compatriot would like to give him a taste of the fire, but I am essentially a humanitarian.”

“I will kill in defense of my life or in defense of those who need protection,” Burton said. “But I am not a murderer.”

“Killing this Jew would be an act in defense of your life,” Göring replied. “If you do not, you will die anyway. Only it will take you a long time.”
“I will not,” Burton said.

Göring sighed. “You English! Well, I would rather have you on my side. But if you don’t want to do the rational thing, so be it. What about you?” he said to Frigate.

Frigate, who was still in agony, said, “Your ashes ended in a trash heap in Dachau because of what you did and what you were. Are you going to repeat the same criminal acts on this world?”

Göring laughed and said, “I know what happened to me. Enough of my Jewish slaves have told me.”

He pointed at Monat. “What kind of a freak is that?”

Burton explained. Göring looked grave, then said, “I couldn’t trust him. He goes into the slave camp. You, there, apeman. What do you say?”

Kazz, to Burton’s surprise, stepped forward. “I kill for you. I don’t want to be slave.”

He took the club while the guards held their spears poised to run him through if he had other ideas for using it. He glared at them from under his shelving brows, then raised the club. There was a crack, and the slave
pitched forward on the dirt. Kazz returned the club to Campbell and stepped aside. He did not look at Burton.

Göring said, “All the slaves will be assembled tonight, and they will be shown what will happen to them if they try to get away. The escapees will be roasted for a while, then put out of their misery. My distinguished colleague will personally handle the club. He likes that sort of thing.”

He pointed at Alice. “That one. I’ll take her.”


Burton roared, snatched a club from Campbell’s hand, and leaped upon the table. Göring fell backward, the tip of the club narrowly missing his nose. At the same time, the Roman thrust a spear at Burton and wounded him in the shoulder. Burton kept hold of the club, whirled, and knocked the weapon out of Tullius’ hand.

The slaves, shouting, threw themselves upon the
guards. Frigate jerked a spear loose and brought the butt of it against Kazz’s head. Kazz crumpled. Monat kicked a guard in the groin and picked up his spear.

Burton did not remember anything after that. He awoke several hours before dusk. His head hurt worse than before. His ribs and both shoulders were stiff with pain. He was lying on grass in a pine log enclosure with a diameter of about fifty yards. Fifteen feet above the grass, circling the interior of the wall, was a wooden walk on which armed guards paced.

He groaned when he sat up. Frigate, squatting near him, said, “I was afraid you’d never come out of it.”

“Where are the women?” Burton said.

Frigate began to weep. Burton shook his head and said, “Quit blubbering. Where are they?”

“Where the hell do you think they are?” Frigate said. “Oh, my God!”

“Don’t think about the women. There’s nothing you can do for them. Not now, anyway. Why wasn’t I killed after I attacked Göring?”

Frigate wiped away the tears and said, “Beats me.
"Maybe they're saving you, and me, for the fire. As an example. I wish they had killed us."

"What, so recently gained paradise and wish so soon to lose it?" Burton said. He began to laugh but quit because pains speared his head.

Burton talked to Robert Spruce, an Englishman born in 1945 in Kensington. Spruce said that it was less than a month since Göring and Tullius had seized power. For the time being, they were leaving their neighbors in peace. Eventually, of course, they would try to conquer the adjacent territories, including the Onondaga Indians across The River. So far, no slave had escaped to spread word about Göring’s intentions.

"But the people on the borders can see for themselves that the walls are being built by slaves," Burton said.

Spruce grinned wryly and said, "Göring has spread the word that these are all Jews, that he is only interested in enslaving Jews. So, what do they care? As you can see for yourself, that is not true. Half of the slaves are Gentile."

At dusk, Burton, Frigate, Ruach, de Greystoke, and
Monat were taken from the stockade and marched down to a grailrock. There were about two hundred slaves there, guarded by about seventy Göringites. Their grails were placed on the rock, and they waited. After the blue flames roared, the grails were taken down. Each slave opened his, and guards removed the tobacco, liquor, and half of the food.

Frigate had gashes in his head and in his shoulder which needed sewing up, though the bleeding had stopped. His color had much improved, though his back and kidneys pained him.

“So now we’re slaves,” Frigate said. “Dick, you thought quite a lot of the institution of slavery. What do you think of it now?”

“That was Oriental slavery,” Burton said. “In this type of slavery, there’s no chance for a slave to gain his freedom. Nor is there any personal feeling, except hatred, between slave and owner. In the Orient, the situation was different. Of course, like any human institution, it had its abuses.”

“You’re a stubborn man,” Frigate said. “Have you noticed that at least half the slaves are Jews? Late-
twentieth-century Israeli, most of them. That girl over there told me that Göring managed to start grail-slavery by stirring up anti-Semitism in this area. Of course, it had to exist before it could be aroused. Then, after he had gotten into power with Tullius’ aid, he enslaved many of his former supporters.”

He continued, “The hell of it is, Göring is not, relatively speaking, a genuine anti-Semite. He personally intervened with Himmler and others to save Jews. But he is something even worse than a genuine Jew-hater. He is an opportunist. Anti-Semitism was a tidal wave in Germany; to get any place, you had to ride the wave. So, Göring rode there, just as he rode here. An anti-Semite such as Goebbels or Frank believed in the principles they professed. Perverted and hateful principles, true, but still principles. Whereas big fat happy-go-lucky Göring did not really care one way or the other about the Jews. He just wanted to use them.”

“All very well,” Burton said, “but what has that got to do with me? Oh, I see! That look! You are getting ready to lecture me.”

“Dick, I admire you as I have admired few men. I
love you as one man loves another. I am as happy and delighted to have had the singular good luck to fall in with you as, say, Plutarch would be if he had met Alcibiades or Theseus. But I am not blind. I know your faults, which are many, and I regret them.”

“Just which one is it this time?”


“I was still angry because of the injustices I had suffered at Damascus. To be expelled from the consulate because of the lies of my enemies, among whom.…”

“That doesn’t excuse your writing lies about a whole group,” Frigate said.

“Lies! I wrote the truth!”

“You may have thought they were truths. But I come from an age which definitely knows that they were not. In fact, no one in his right mind in your time would have believed that crap!”
“The facts are,” Burton said, “that the Jewish moneylenders in Damascus were charging the poor a thousand percent interest on their loans. The facts are that they were inflicting this monstrous usury not only on the Moslem and Christian populace but on their own people. The facts are, that when my enemies in England accused me of anti-Semitism, many Jews in Damascus came to my defense. It is a fact that I protested to the Turks when they sold the synagogue of the Damascan Jews to the Greek Orthodox bishop so he could turn it into a church. It is a fact that I went out and drummed up eighteen Moslems to testify on behalf of the Jews. It is a fact that I protected the Christian missionaries from the Druzes. It is a fact that I warned the Druzes that that fat and oily Turkish swine, Rashid Pasha, was trying to incite them to revolt so he could massacre them. It is a fact that when I was recalled from my consular post, because of the lies of the Christian missionaries and priests, of Rashid Pasha, and of the Jewish usurers, thousands of Christians, Moslems, and Jews rallied to my aid, though it was too late then.

“It is also a fact that I don’t have to answer to you or to any man for my actions!”
How like Frigate to bring up such an irrelevant subject at such an inappropriate time. Perhaps he was trying to keep from blaming himself by turning his fear and anger on Burton. Or perhaps he really felt that his hero had failed him.

Lev Ruach had been sitting with his head between his hands. He raised his head and said, hollowly, “Welcome to the concentration camp, Burton! This is your first taste of it. It’s an old tale to me, one I was tired of hearing from the beginning. I was in a Nazi camp, and I escaped. I was in a Russian camp, and I escaped. In Israel, I was captured by Arabs, and I escaped.

“So, now, perhaps I can escape again. But to what? To another camp? There seems to be no end to them. Man is forever building them and putting the perennial prisoner, the Jew, or what have you, in them. Even here, where we have a fresh start, where all religions, all prejudices, should have been shattered on the anvil of resurrection, little is changed.”

“Shut your mouth,” a man near Ruach said. He had red hair so curly it was almost kinky, blue eyes, and a
face that might have been handsome if it had not been for his broken nose. He was six feet tall and had a wrestler’s body.

“Dov Targoff here,” he said in a crisp Oxford accent. “Late commander in the Israeli Navy. Pay no attention to this man. He’s one of the old-time Jews, a pessimist, a whiner. He’d rather wail against the wall than stand up and fight like a man.”

Ruach choked, then said, “You arrogant Sabra! I fought; I killed! And I am not a whiner! What are you doing now, you brave warrior? Aren’t you a slave as much as the rest of us?”

“It’s the old story,” a woman said. She was tall and dark-haired and probably would have been a beauty if she had not been so gaunt. “The old story. We fight among ourselves while our enemies conquer. Just as we fought when Titus besieged Jerusalem and we killed more of our own people than we did the Romans. Just as….”

The two men turned against her, and all three argued loudly until a guard began beating them with a stick.

Later, through swollen lips, Targoff said, “I can’t
take much of this, much longer. Soon...well, that guard
is mine to kill.”

“You have a plan?” Frigate said, eagerly, but Targoff
would not answer.

Shortly before dawn, the slaves were awakened and
marched to the grailrock. Again, they were given a
modicum of food. After eating, they were split up into
groups and marched off to their differing assignments.
Burton and Frigate were taken to the northern border.
They were put to work with a thousand other slaves,
and they toiled naked all day in the sun. Their only rest
was when they took their grails to the rock at noon and
were fed.

Göring meant to build a wall between the mountain
and The River; he also intended to erect a second wall
which would run for the full ten-mile length of the
lakeshore and a third wall at the southern end.

Burton and the others had to dig a deep trench and
then pile the dirt taken from the hole into a wall. This
was hard work, for they had only stone hoes with which
to hack at the ground. Since the roots of the grass
formed a thickly tangled complex of very tough
material, they could be cut only with repeated blows. The dirt and roots were scraped up on wooden shovels and tossed onto large bamboo sleds. These were dragged by teams onto the top of the wall, where the dirt was shoveled off to make the wall even higher and thicker.

At night, the slaves were herded back into the stockade. Here, most of them fell asleep almost at once. But Targoff, the red-headed Israeli, squatted by Burton.

"The grapevine gives a little juice now and then," he said. "I heard about the fight you and your crew made. I also heard about your refusal to join Göring and his swine."

"What do you hear about my infamous book?" Burton said.

Targoff smiled and said, "I never heard of it until Ruach brought it to my attention. Your actions speak for themselves. Besides, Ruach is very sensitive about such things. Not that you can really blame him after what he went through. But I do not think that you would behave as you did if you were what he said you are. I
think you’re a good man, the type we need. So….”

Days and nights of hard work and short rations followed. Burton learned through the grapevine about the women. Wilfreda and Fatima were in Campbell’s apartment. Loghu was with Tullius. Alice had been kept by Göring for a week, then had been turned over to a lieutenant, a Manfred von Kreyscharff. Rumor was that Göring had complained of her coldness and had wanted to give her to his bodyguards to do with as they pleased. But von Kreyscharff had asked for her.

Burton was in agony. He could not endure the mental images of her with Göring and von Kreyscharff. He had to stop these beasts or at least die trying. Late that night, he crawled from the big hut he occupied with twenty-five men into Targoff’s hut and woke him up.

“You said you knew that I must be on your side,” he whispered. “When are you going to take me into your confidence? I might as well warn you now that, if you don’t do so at once, I intend to foment a break among my own group and anybody else who will join us.”

“Ruach has told me more about you,” Targoff said. “I didn’t understand, really, what he was talking about.
Could a Jew trust anyone who wrote such a book? Or could such a man be trusted not to turn on them after the common enemy has been defeated?"

Burton opened his mouth to speak angrily, then closed it. For a moment, he was silent. When he spoke, he did so calmly. “In the first place, my actions on Earth speak louder than any of my printed words. I was the friend and protector of many Jews; I had many Jewish friends.”

“That last statement is always a preface to an attack on the Jews,” Targoff said.

“Perhaps. However, even if what Ruach claims were true, the Richard Burton you see before you in this valley is not the Burton who lived on Earth. I think every man has been changed somewhat by his experience here. If he hasn’t, he is incapable of change. He would be better off dead.

“During the four hundred and seventy-six days that I have lived on this River, I have learned much. I am not incapable of changing my mind. I listened to Ruach and Frigate. I argued frequently and passionately with them. And though I did not want to admit it at the time, I
thought much about what they said.”

“Jew-hate is something bred into the child,” Targoff said. “It becomes part of the nerve. No act of will can get rid of it, unless it is not very deeply embedded or the will is extraordinarily strong. The bell rings, and Pavlov’s dog salivates. Mention the word Jew, and the nervous system storms the citadel of the mind of the Gentile. Just as the word Arab storms mine. But I have a realistic basis for hating all Arabs.”

“I have pled enough,” Burton said. “You will either accept me or reject me. In either case, you know what I will do.”

“I accept,” Targoff said. “If you can change your mind, I can change mine. I’ve worked with you, eaten bread with you. I like to think I’m a good judge of character. Tell me, if you were planning this, what would you do?”

Targoff listened carefully. At the end of Burton’s explanation, Targoff nodded. “Much like my plan. Now....”
The next day, shortly after breakfast, several guards came for Burton and Frigate. Targoff looked hard at Burton, who knew what Targoff was thinking. Nothing could be done except to march off to Göring’s “palace.” He was seated in a big wooden chair and smoking a pipe. He asked them to sit down and offered them cigars and wine.

“Every once in a while,” he said, “I like to relax and talk with somebody besides my colleagues, who are not overly bright. I like especially to talk with somebody who lived after I died. And to men who were famous in their time. I’ve few of either type, so far.”

“Many of your Israeli prisoners lived after you,” Frigate said.

“Ah, the Jews!” Göring airily waved his pipe. “That is the trouble. They know me too well. They are sullen when I try to talk to them, and too many have tried to kill me for me to feel comfortable around them. Not that
I have anything against them. I don’t particularly like Jews, but I had many Jewish friends….”

Burton reddened.

Göring, after sucking on his pipe, continued, “Der Führer was a great man, but he had some idiocies. One of them was his attitude toward Jews. Myself, I cared less. But the Germany of my time was anti-Jewish, and a man must go with the zeitgeist if he wants to get any place in life. Enough of that. Even here, a man cannot get away from them.”

He chattered on for a while, then asked Frigate many questions concerning the fate of his contemporaries and the history of post-war Germany.

“If you Americans had had any political sense, you would have declared war on Russia as soon as we surrendered. We would have fought with you against the Bolshevik, and we would have crushed them.”

Frigate did not reply. Göring then told several “funny,” very obscene stories. He asked Burton to tell him about the strange experience he had had before being resurrected in the valley.

Burton was surprised. Had Göring learned about this
from Kazz or was there an informer among the slaves?

He told in full detail everything that had happened between the time he opened his eyes to find himself in the place of floating bodies to the instant when the man in the aerial canoe pointed the metal tube at him.

"The extra-Terrestrial, Monat, has a theory that some beings—call them Whomever or X—have been observing mankind since he ceased to be an ape. For at least two million years. These superbeings have, in some manner, recorded every cell of every human being that ever lived from the moment of conception, probably, to the moment of death. This seems a staggering concept, but it is no more staggering than the resurrection of all humanity and the reshaping of this planet into one Rivervalley. The recordings may have been made when the recordees were living. Or it may be that these superbeings detected vibrations from the past, just as we on Earth saw the light of stars as they had been a thousand years before.

"Monat, however, inclines to the former theory. He does not believe in time travel even in a limited sense.

"Monat believes that the X’s stored these recordings.
How, he does not know. But this planet was then reshaped for us. It is obviously one great Riverworld. During our journey up River, we’ve talked to dozens whose descriptions leave no doubt that they come from widely scattered parts, from all over. One was from far up in the northern hemisphere; another, far down in the southern. All the descriptions fall together to make a picture of a world that has been reworked into one zigzagging Rivervalley.

“Men we talked to were killed or died by accident here and were resurrected again in the areas we happened to be traveling through. Monat says that we resurrectees are still being recorded. And when one of us dies again, the up-to-the-minute recordings are being placed somewhere—maybe under the surface of this planet—and played into energy-matter converters. The bodies were reproduced as they were at the moment of death and then the rejuvenating devices restored the sleeping bodies. Probably in that same chamber in which I awoke. After this, the bodies, young and whole again, were recorded and then destroyed. And the recordings were played out again, this time through devices under the ground. Once more, energy-
matter converters, probably using the heat of this planet’s molten core as energy, reproduced us above the ground, near the grailstones. I do not know why they are not resurrected a second time in the same spot where they died. But then I don’t know why all our hairs were shaven off or why men’s facial hairs don’t grow or why men were circumcised and women made virgins again. Or why we were resurrected. For what purpose? Whoever put us here has not shown up to tell us why.”

“The thing is,” Frigate said, “the thing is, we are not the same people we were on Earth. I died. Burton died. You died, Hermann Göring. Everybody died. And we cannot be brought back to life!”

Göring sucked on his pipe noisily, stared at Frigate, and then said, “Why not? I am living again. Do you deny that?”

“Yes! I do deny that—in a sense. You are living. But you are not the Hermann Göring who was born in Marienbad Sanatorium at Rosenheim in Bavaria on January 12, 1893. You are not the Hermann Göring whose godfather was Dr. Hermann Eppenstein, a Jew
converted to Christianity. You are not the Göring who succeeded von Richthofen after his death and continued to lead his fliers against the Allies even after the war ended. You are not the Reichsmarschall of Hitler’s Germany nor the refugee arrested by Lieutenant Jerome N. Shapiro. Eppenstein and Shapiro, hah! And you are not the Hermann Göring who took his life by swallowing potassium cyanide during his trial for his crimes against humanity!”

Göring tamped his pipe with tobacco and said, mildly, “You certainly know much about me. I should be flattered, I suppose. At least, I was not forgotten.”

“Generally, you were,” Frigate said. “You did have a long-lived reputation as a sinister clown, a failure, and a toady.”

Burton was surprised. He had not known that the fellow would stand up to someone who had power of life and death over him or who had treated him so painfully. But then perhaps Frigate hoped to be killed.

It was probable that he was banking on Göring’s curiosity.

Göring said, “Explain your statement. Not about my
reputation. Every man of importance expects to be reviled and misunderstood by the brainless masses. Explain why I am not the same man."

Frigate smiled slightly and said, “You are the product, the hybrid, of a recording and an energy-matter converter. You were made with all the memories of the dead man Hermann Göring and with every cell of his body a duplicate. You have everything he had. So you think you are Göring. But you are not! You are a duplication, and that is all! The original Hermann Göring is nothing but molecules that have been absorbed into the soil and the air and so into plants and back into the flesh of beasts and men and out again as excrement, _und so weiter_!

“But you, here before me, are not the original, any more than the recording on a disc or a tape is the original voice, the vibrations issuing from the mouth of a man and detected and converted by an electronic device and then replayed.””

Burton understood the reference, since he had seen an Edison phonograph in Paris in 1888. He felt outraged, actually violated, at Frigate’s assertions.
Göring’s wide-open eyes and reddening face indicated that he, too, felt threatened down to the core of his being.

After stuttering, Göring said, “And why would these beings go to all this trouble just to make duplicates?”

Frigate shrugged and said, “I don’t know.”

Göring heaved up from his chair and pointed the stem of his pipe at Frigate.

“You lie!” he screamed in German. “You lie, scheisshund!”

Frigate quivered as if he expected to be struck over the kidneys again, but he said, “I must be right. Of course, you don’t have to believe what I say. I can’t prove anything. And I understand exactly how you feel. I know that I am Peter Jairus Frigate, born 1918, died A.D. 2008. But I also must believe, because logic tells me so, that I am only, really, a being who has the memories of that Frigate who will never rise from the dead. In a sense, I am the son of that Frigate who can never exist again. Not flesh of his flesh, blood of his blood, but mind of his mind. I am not the man who was born of a woman on that lost world of Earth. I am the
byblow of science and a machine. Unless...."

Göring said, "Yes? Unless what?"

"Unless there is some entity attached to the human body, an entity which is the human being. I mean, it contains all that makes the individual what he is, and when the body is destroyed, this entity still exists. So that, if the body were to be made again, this entity, storing the essence of the individual, could be attached again to the body. And it would record everything that the body recorded. And so the original individual would live again. He would not be just a duplicate."

Burton said, "For God's sake, Pete! Are you proposing the soul?"

Frigate nodded and said, "Something analogous to the soul. Something that the primitives dimly apprehended and called a soul."

Göring laughed uproariously. Burton would have laughed, but he did not care to give Göring any support, moral or intellectual.

When Göring had quit laughing, he said, "Even here, in a world which is clearly the result of science, the supernaturalists won't quit trying. Well, enough of that."
To more practical and immediate matters. Tell me, have you changed your mind? Are you ready to join me?"

Burton glared and said, “I would not be under the orders of a man who rapes women; moreover, I respect the Israelis. I would rather be a slave with them than free with you.”

Göring scowled and said, harshly, “Very well. I thought as much. But I had hoped...well, I have been having trouble with the Roman. If he gets his way, you will see how merciful I have been to you slaves. You do not know him. Only my intervention has saved one of you being tortured to death every night for his amusement.”

At noon, the two returned to their work in the hills. Neither got a chance to speak to Targoff or any of the slaves, since their duties happened not to bring them into contact. They did not dare make an open attempt to talk to him, because that would have meant a severe beating.

After they returned to the stockade in the evening, Burton told the others what had happened.

“More than likely Targoff will not believe my story.
He’ll think we’re spies. Even if he’s not certain, he can’t afford to take chances. So there’ll be trouble. It’s too bad that this had to happen. The escape plan will have to be cancelled for tonight.”

Nothing untoward took place—at first. The Israelis walked away from Burton and Frigate when they tried to talk to them. The stars came out, and the stockade was flooded with a light almost as bright as a full moon on Earth.

The prisoners stayed inside their barracks, but they talked in low voices with their heads together. Despite their deep tiredness, they could not sleep. The guards must have sensed the tension, even though they could not see or hear the men in the huts. They walked back and forth on the walks, stood together talking, and peered down into the enclosure by the light of the night sky and the flames of the resin torches.

“Targoff will do nothing until it rains,” Burton said. He gave orders. Frigate was to stand first watch; Robert Spruce, the second; Burton, third. Burton lay down on his pile of leaves and, ignoring the murmuring of voices and the moving around of bodies, fell asleep.
It seemed that he had just closed his eyes when Spruce touched him. He rose quickly to his feet, yawned, and stretched. The others were all awake. Within a few minutes, the first of the clouds formed. In ten minutes, the stars were blotted out. Thunder grumbled way up in the mountains, and the first lightning flash forked the sky.

Lightning struck near. Burton saw by its flash that the guards were huddled under the roofs sticking out from the base of the watch houses at each corner of the stockade. They were covered with towels against the chill and the rain.

Burton crawled from his barracks to the next. Targoff was standing inside the entrance. Burton stood up and said, “Does the plan still hold?”

“You know better than that,” Targoff said. A bolt of lightning showed his angry face. “You Judas!”

He stepped forward, and a dozen men followed him. Burton did not wait; he attacked. But, as he rushed forward, he heard a strange sound. He paused to look out through the door. Another flash revealed a guard sprawled facedown in the grass beneath a walk.
Targoff had put his fists down when Burton turned his back on him. He said, “What’s going on, Burton?”

“Wait,” the Englishman replied. He had no more idea than the Israeli about what was happening, but anything unexpected could be to his advantage.

Lightning illuminated the squat figure of Kazz on the wooden walk. He was swinging a huge stone axe against a group of guards who were in the angle formed by the meeting of the two walls. Another flash. The guards were sprawled out on the walk. Darkness. At the next blaze of light, another was down; the remaining two were running away down the walk in different directions.

Another bolt very near the wall showed that, finally, the other guards were aware of what was happening. They ran down the walk, shouting and waving their spears.

Kazz, ignoring them, slid a long bamboo ladder down into the enclosure and then he threw a bundle of spears after it. By the next flash, he could be seen advancing toward the nearest guards.

Burton snatched a spear and almost ran up the
ladder. The others, including the Israeli, were behind him. The fight was bloody and brief. With the guards on the walk either stabbed or hurled to their deaths, only those in the watch houses remained. The ladder was carried to the other end of the stockade and placed against the gate. In two minutes, men had climbed to the outside, dropped down, and opened the gate. For the first time, Burton found the chance to talk to Kazz.

"I thought you had sold us out."

"No. Not me, Kazz," Kazz said reproachfully. "You know I love you, Burton-naq. You’re my friend, my chief. I pretend to join your enemies because that’s playing it smart. I surprise you don’t do the same. You’re no dummy."

"Certainly, you aren’t," Burton said. "But I couldn’t bring myself to kill those slaves."

Lightning revealed Kazz shrugging. He said, "That don’t bother me. I don’t know them. Besides, you hear Göring. He say they die anyway."

"It’s a good thing you chose tonight to rescue us," Burton said. He did not tell Kazz why since he did not want to confuse him. Moreover, there were more
important things to do.

“Tonight’s a good night for this,” Kazz said. “Big battle going on. Tullius and Göring get very drunk and quarrel. They fight; their men fight. While they kill each other, invaders come. Those brown men across The River…what you call them?…Onondagas, that’s them. Their boats come just before rain come. They make raid to steal slaves, too. Or maybe just for the hell of it. So, I think, now’s good time to start my plan, get Burton-naq free.”

As suddenly as it had come, the rain ceased. Burton could hear shouts and screams from far off, toward The River. Drums were beating up and down The Riverbanks. He said to Targoff, “We can either try to escape, and probably do so easily, or we can attack.”

“I intend to wipe out the beasts who enslaved us,” Targoff said. “There are other stockades nearby. I’ve sent men to open their gates. The rest are too far away to reach quickly; they’re strung out at half-mile intervals.”

By then, the blockhouse in which the off-duty guards lived had been stormed. The slaves armed themselves
and then started toward the noise of the conflict. Burton’s group was on the right flank. They had not gone half a mile before they came upon corpses and wounded, a mixture of Onondagas and whites.

Despite the heavy rain, a fire had broken out. By its increasing light, they saw that the flames came from the longhouse. Outlined in the glare were struggling figures. The escapees advanced across the plain. Suddenly, one side broke and ran toward them with the victors, whooping and screaming jubilantly, after them.

“There’s Göring,” Frigate said. “His fat isn’t going to help him get away, that’s for sure.”

He pointed, and Burton could see the German desperately pumping his legs but falling behind the others. “I don’t want the Indians to have the honor of killing him,” Burton said. “We owe it to Alice to get him.”

Campbell’s long-legged figure was ahead of them all, and it was toward him that Burton threw his spear. To the Scot, the missile must have seemed to come out of the darkness from nowhere. Too late, he tried to dodge. The flint head buried itself in the flesh between
his left shoulder and chest, and he fell on his side. He tried to get up a moment afterward, but he was kicked back down by Burton.

Campbell’s eyes rolled; blood trickled from his mouth. He pointed at another wound, a deep gash in his side just below the ribs. “You...your woman...Wilfreda...did that,” he gasped. “But I killed her, the bitch....”

Burton wanted to ask him where Alice was, but Kazz, screaming phrases in his native tongue, brought his club down on the Scot’s head. Burton picked up his spear and ran after Kazz. “Don’t kill Göring!” he shouted. “Leave him to me!”

Kazz did not hear him; he was busy fighting with two Onondagas. Burton saw Alice as she ran by him. He reached out and grabbed her and spun her around. She screamed and started to struggle. Burton shouted at her; suddenly, recognizing him, she collapsed into his arms and began weeping. Burton would have tried to comfort her, but he was afraid that Göring would escape him. He pushed her away and ran toward the German and threw his spear. It grazed Göring’s head,
and he screamed and stopped running and began to look for the weapon but Burton was on him. Both fell to the ground and rolled over and over, each trying to strangle the other.

Something struck Burton on the back of his head. Stunned, he released his grip. Göring pushed him down on the ground and dived toward the spear. Seizing it, he rose and stepped toward the prostrate Burton. Burton tried to get to his feet, but his knees seemed to be made of putty and everything was whirling. Göring suddenly staggered as Alice tackled his legs from behind, and he fell forward. Burton made another effort, found he could at least stagger, and sprawled over Göring. Again, they rolled over and over with Göring squeezing on Burton’s throat. Then a shaft slid over Burton’s shoulder, burning his skin, and its stone tip drove into Göring’s throat.

Burton stood up, pulled the spear out, and plunged it into the man’s fat belly. Göring tried to sit up, but he fell back and died. Alice slumped to the ground and wept.

Dawn saw the end of the battle. By then, the slaves had broken out of every stockade. The warriors of
Göring and Tullius were ground between the two forces, Onondaga and slaves, like husks between millstones. The Indians, who had probably raided only to loot and get more slaves and their grails, retreated. They climbed aboard their dugouts and canoes and paddled across the lake. Nobody felt like chasing them.
The days that followed were busy ones. A rough census indicated that at least half of the twenty thousand inhabitants of Göring’s little kingdom had been killed, severely wounded, abducted by the Onondaga, or had fled. The Roman Tullius Hostilius had apparently escaped. The survivors chose a provisional government. Targoff, Burton, Spruce, Ruach, and two others formed an executive committee with considerable, but temporary, powers. John de Greystock had disappeared. He had been seen during the beginning of the battle and then he had just dropped out of sight.

Alice Hargreaves moved into Burton’s hut without either saying a word about the why or wherefore.

Later, she said, “Frigate tells me that if this entire planet is constructed like the areas we’ve seen, and there’s no reason to believe it isn’t, then The River must be at least twenty million miles long. It’s incredible, but
so is our resurrection, everything about this world. Also, there may be thirty-five to thirty-seven billion people living along The River. What chance would I have of ever finding my Earthly husband?

"Moreover, I love you. Yes, I know I didn’t act as if I loved you. But something has changed in me. Perhaps it’s all I’ve been through that is responsible. I don’t think I could have loved you on Earth. I might have been fascinated, but I would also have been repelled, perhaps frightened. I couldn’t have made you a good wife there. Here, I can. Rather, I’ll make you a good mate, since there doesn’t seem to be any authority or religious institutions that could marry us. That in itself shows how I’ve changed. That I could be calmly living with a man I’m not married to…! Well, there you are."

"We’re no longer living in the Victorian age," Burton said. "What would you call this present age…the Mélange era? The Mixed Age? Eventually, it will be The River Culture, The Riparian World, rather, many River cultures."

"Providing it lasts," Alice said. "It started suddenly; it may end just as swiftly and unexpectedly."
Certainly, Burton thought, the green River and the grassy plain and the forested hills and the unscalable mountains did not seem like Shakespeare's insubstantial vision. They were solid, real, as real as the men walking toward him now, Frigate, Monat, Kazz, and Ruach. He stepped out of the hut and greeted them.

Kazz began talking. "A long time ago, before I speak English good, I see something. I try to tell you then, but you don't understand me. I see a man who don't have this on his forehead."

He pointed at the center of his own forehead and then at that of the others.

"I know," Kazz continued, "you can't see it. Pete and Monat can't either. Nobody else can. But I see it on everybody's forehead. Except on that man I try to catch long time ago. Then, one day, I see a woman don't have it, but I don't say nothing to you. Now, I see a third person who don't have it."

"He means," Monat said, "that he is able to perceive certain symbols or characters on the forehead of each and every one of us. He can see these only in bright sunlight and at a certain angle. But everyone he's ever
seen has had these symbols—except for the three he’s mentioned.”

“He must be able to see a little further into the spectrum than we,” Frigate said. “Obviously, Whoever stamped us with the sign of the beast or whatever you want to call it, did not know about the special ability of Kazz’s species. Which shows that They are not omniscient.”

“Obviously,” Burton said. “Nor infallible. Otherwise, I would never have awakened in that place before being resurrected. So, who is this person who does not have these symbols on his skin?”

He spoke calmly, but his heart beat swiftly. If Kazz was right, he might have detected an agent of the beings who had brought the entire human species to life again. Would They be gods in disguise?

“Robert Spruce!” Frigate said.

“Before we jump to any conclusions,” Monat said, “don’t forget that the omission may have been an accident.”

“We’ll find out,” Burton said ominously. “But why the symbols? Why should we be marked?”
“Probably for identification or numbering purposes,” Monat said. “Who knows, except Those Who put us here.”

“Let’s go face Spruce,” Burton said.

“We have to catch him first,” Frigate replied. “Kazz made the mistake of mentioning to Spruce that he knew about the symbols. He did so at breakfast this morning. I wasn’t there, but those who were said Spruce turned pale. A few minutes later, he excused himself, and he hasn’t been seen since. We’ve sent search parties out up and down The River, across The River, and also into the hills.”

“His flight is an admission of guilt,” Burton said. He was angry. Was man a kind of cattle branded for some sinister purpose?

That afternoon, the drums announced that Spruce had been caught. Three hours later, he was standing before the council table in the newly built meeting hall. Behind the table sat the Council. The doors were closed, for the Councilmen felt that this was something that could be conducted more efficiently without a crowd. However, Monat, Kazz, and Frigate were also
“I may as well tell you now,” Burton said, “that we have decided to go to any lengths to get the truth from you. It is against the principles of every one at this table to use torture. We despise and loathe those who resort to torture. But we feel that this is one issue where principles must be abandoned.”

“Principles must never be abandoned,” Spruce said evenly. “The end never justifies the means. Even if clinging to them means defeat, death, and remaining in ignorance.”

“There’s too much at stake,” Targoff said. “I, who have been the victim of unprincipled men; Ruach, who has been tortured several times; the others, we all agree. We’ll use fire and the knife on you if we must. It is necessary that we find out the truth.

“Now, tell me, are you one of Those responsible for this resurrection?”

“You will be no better than Göring and his kind if you torture me,” Spruce said. His voice was beginning to break. “In fact, you will be far worse off, for you are forcing yourselves to be like him in order to gain
something that may not even exist. Or, if it does, may not be worth the price.”

“Tell us the truth,” Targoff said. “Don’t lie. We know that you must be an agent; perhaps one of Those directly responsible.”

“There is a fire blazing in that stone over there,” Burton said. “If you don’t start talking at once, you will...well, the roasting you get will be the least of your pain. I am an authority on Chinese and Arabic methods of torture. I assure you that they had some very refined means for extracting the truth. And I have no qualms about putting my knowledge into practice.”

Spruce, pale and sweating, said, “You may be denying yourself eternal life if you do this. It will at least set you far back on your journey, delay the final goal.”

“What is that?” Burton replied.

Spruce ignored him. “We can’t stand pain,” he muttered. “We’re too sensitive.”

“Are you going to talk?” Targoff said.

“Even the idea of self-destruction is painful and to be avoided except when absolutely necessary,” Spruce
mumbled. "Despite the fact that I know I shall live again."

"Put him over the fire," Targoff said to the two men who held Spruce.

Monat spoke up. "Just one moment. Spruce, the science of my people was much more advanced than that of Earth's. So I am more qualified to make an educated guess. Perhaps we could spare you the pain of the fire, and the pain of betraying your purpose, if you were merely to affirm what I have to say. That way, you wouldn't be making a positive betrayal."

Spruce said, "I'm listening."

"It's my theory that you are a Terrestrial. You belong to an age chronologically far past A.D. 2008. You must be the descendant of the few who survived my death scanner. Judging by the technology and power required to reconstruct the surface of this planet into one vast Rivervalley, your time must be much later than the twenty-first century. Just guessing, the fiftieth century A.D.?"

Spruce looked at the fire, then said, "Add two thousand more years."
“If this planet is about the size of Earth, it can hold only so many people. Where are the others, the stillborn, the children who died before they were five, the imbeciles and idiots, and those who lived after the twentieth century?”

“They are elsewhere,” Spruce said. He glanced at the fire again, and his lips tightened.

“My own people,” Monat said, “had a theory that they would eventually be able to see into their past. I won’t go into the details, but it was possible that past events could be visually detected and then recorded. Time travel, of course, was sheer fantasy.

“But what if your culture was able to do what we only theorized about? What if you recorded every single human being that had ever lived? Located this planet and constructed this Rivervalley? Somewhere, maybe under the very surface of this planet, used energy-matter conversion, say from the heat of this planet’s molten core, and the recordings to re-create the bodies of the dead in the tanks? Used biological techniques to rejuvenate the bodies and to restore limbs, eyes, and so on and also to correct any physical defects?”
“Then,” Monat continued, “you made more recordings of the newly created bodies and stored them in some vast memory tank? Later, you destroyed the bodies in the tanks? Re-created them again through means of the conductive metal which is also used to charge the grails? These could be buried beneath the ground. The resurrection then occurs without recourse to supernatural means.

“The big question is, why?”

“If you had it in your power to do all this, would you not think it was your *ethical* duty?” Spruce asked.

“Yes, but I would resurrect only those worth resurrecting.”

“And what if others did not accept your criteria?” Spruce said. “Do you really think you are wise enough and good enough to judge? Would you place yourself on a level with God? No, all must be given a second chance, no matter how bestial or selfish or petty or stupid. Then, it will be up to them.…”

He fell silent, as if he had regretted his outburst and meant to say no more.

“Besides,” Monat said, “you would want to make a
study of humanity as it existed in the past. You would want to record all the languages that man ever spoke, his mores, his philosophies, biographies. To do this, you need agents, posing as resurrectees, to mingle with the Riverpeople and to take notes, to observe, to study. How long will this study take? One thousand years? Two? Ten? A million?

“And what about the eventual disposition of us? Are we to stay here forever?”

“You will stay here as long as it takes for you to be rehabilitated,” Spruce shouted. “Then….”

He closed his mouth, glared, then opened it to say, “Continued contact with you makes even the toughest of us take on your characteristics. We have to go through a rehabilitation ourselves. Already, I feel unclean…."

“Put him over the fire,” Targoff said. “We’ll get the entire truth.”

“No, you won’t!” Spruce cried. “I should have done this long ago! Who knows what….”

He fell to the ground, and his skin changed to a gray-blue color. Dr. Steinborg, a Councilman, examined him,
but it was apparent to all that he was dead.

Targoff said, “Better take him away now, Doctor. Dissect him. We’ll wait here for your report.”

“With stone knives, no chemicals, no microscopes, what kind of a report can you expect?” Steinborg said. “But I’ll do my best.”

The body was carried off. Burton said, “I’m glad he didn’t force us to admit we were bluffing. If he had kept his mouth shut, he could have defeated us.”

“Then you really weren’t going to torture him?” Frigate said. “I was hoping you didn’t mean your threat. If you had, I was going to walk out then and there and never see any of you again.”

“Of course we didn’t mean it,” Ruach said. “Spruce would have been right. We’d have been no better than Göring. But we could have tried other means. Hypnotism for instance. Burton, Monat, and Steinborg were experts in that field.”

“The trouble is, we still don’t know if we did get the truth,” Targoff said. “Actually, he may have been lying. Monat supplied some guesses, and, if these were wrong, Spruce could have led us astray by agreeing
with Monat. I’d say we can’t be at all sure.”

They agreed on one thing. Their chances of detecting another agent through the absence of symbols on the forehead would be gone. Now that They—whoever They were—knew about the visibility of the characters to Kazz’s species, They would take the proper measures to prevent detection.

Steinborg returned three hours later. “There is nothing to distinguish him from any other member of Homo sapiens. Except this one little device.”

He held up a black shiny ball about the size of a matchhead.

“I located this on the surface of the forebrain. It was attached to some nerves by wires so thin that I could see them only at a certain angle, when they caught the light. It’s my opinion that Spruce killed himself by means of this device and that he did so by literally thinking himself dead. Somehow, this little ball translated a wish for death into the deed. Perhaps, it reacted to the thought by releasing a poison which I do not have facilities for analyzing.” He concluded his report and passed the ball around to the others.
Thirty days later, Burton, Frigate, Ruach, and Kazz were returning from a trip up River. It was just before dawn.

The cold heavy mists that piled up to six or seven feet above The River in the latter part of the night swirled around them. They could not see in any direction farther than a strong man might make a standing broad jump. But Burton, standing in the prow of the bamboo-hulled single-masted boat, knew they were close to the western shore. Near the relatively shallow depths the current ran more slowly, and they had just steered to port from the middle of The River.

If his calculations were correct, they should be close to the ruins of Göring’s hall. At any moment, he expected to see a strip of denser darkness appear out of the dark waters, the banks of that land he now called home. Home, for Burton, had always been a place from which to sally forth, a resting place, a temporary
fortress in which to write a book about his last expedition, a lair in which to heal fresh hurts, a conning tower from which he looked out for new lands to explore.

Thus, only two weeks after the death of Spruce, Burton had felt the need to get to some place other than the one in which he now was. He heard a rumor that copper had been discovered on the western shore about a hundred miles upRiver. This was a length of shore of not more than twelve miles, inhabited by fifth-century B.C. Sarmatians and thirteenth-century A.D. Frisians.

Burton did not really think the story was true—but it gave him an excuse to travel. Ignoring Alice’s pleas to take her with him, he had set off.

Now, a month later and after some adventures, not all unpleasant, they were almost home. The story had not been entirely unfounded. There was copper but only in minute amounts. So the four had gotten into their boat for the easy trip downcurrent, their sail pushed by the never ceasing wind. They journeyed during the daytime and beached the boat during mealtimes wherever there
were friendly people who did not mind strangers using their grailstones. At night they either slept among the friendlies or, if in hostile waters, sailed by in the darkness.

The last leg of their trip was made after the sun went down. Before getting home, they had to pass a section of the valley where slave-hungry eighteenth-century Mohawks lived on one side and equally greedy Carthaginians of the third century B.C. on the other. Having slipped through under cover of the fog, they were almost home.

Abruptly, Burton said, “There’s the bank. Pete, lower the mast! Kazz, Lev, back oars! Jump to it!”

A few minutes later, they had landed and had pulled the lightweight craft completely out of the water and upon the gently sloping shore. Now that they were out of the mists, they could see the sky paling above the eastern mountains.

“Dead reckoning come alive!” Burton said. “We’re ten paces beyond the grailstone near the ruins!”

He scanned the bamboo huts along the plain and the buildings evident in the long grasses and under the giant
trees of the hills.

Not a single person was to be seen. The valley was asleep.

He said, “Don’t you think it’s strange that no one’s up yet? Or that we’ve not been challenged by the sentinels?”

Frigate pointed toward the lookout tower to their right. Burton swore and said, “They’re asleep, by God, or deserted their post!”

But he knew as he spoke that this was no case of dereliction of duty. Though he had said nothing to the others about it, the moment he had stepped ashore, he had been sure something was very wrong. He began running across the plain toward the hut in which he and Alice lived.

Alice was sleeping on the bamboo-and-grass bed on the right side of the building. Only her head was visible, for she was curled up under a blanket of towels fastened to each other by the magnetic clasps. Burton threw the blanket back, got down on his knees by the low bed, and raised her to a sitting position. Her head lolled forward, and her arms hung limply. But she had a
healthy color and breathed normally.

Burton called her name three times. She slept on. He slapped both her cheeks sharply; red splotches sprang up on them. Her eyelids fluttered, then she went back to sleep.

By then Frigate and Ruach appeared. “We’ve looked into some of the other huts,” Frigate said. “They’re all asleep. I tried to wake a couple of them, but they’re out for the count. What’s wrong?”

Burton said, “Who do you think has the power or the need to do this? Spruce! Spruce and his kind, Whoever They are!”

“Why?” Frigate sounded frightened.

“They were looking for me! They must have come in under the fog, somehow put this whole area to sleep!”

“A sleep-gas would do it easily enough,” Ruach said. “Although people who have powers such as Theirs could have devices we’ve never dreamed of.”

“They were looking for me!” Burton shouted.

“Which means, if true, that They may be back tonight,” Frigate said. “But why would They be
searching for you?"

Ruach replied for Burton. “Because he, as far as we know, was the only man to awaken in the preresurrection phase. Why he did is a mystery. But it’s evident something went wrong. It may also be a mystery to Them. I’d be inclined to think They’ve been discussing this and finally decided to come here. Maybe to kidnap Burton for observation—or some more sinister purpose.”

“Possibly. They wanted to erase from my memory all that I’d seen in that chamber of floating bodies,” Burton said. “Such a thing should not be beyond Their science.”

“But you’ve told that story to many,” Frigate said. “They couldn’t possibly track down all those people and remove the memory of your story from their minds.”

“Would that be necessary? How many believe my tale? Sometimes I doubt it myself.”

Ruach said, “Speculation is fruitless. What do we do now?”

Alice shrieked, “Richard!” and they turned to see her
sitting up and staring at them.

For a few minutes, they could not get her to understand what had happened. Finally she said, “So that’s why the fog covered the land, too! I thought it was strange, but of course I had no way of knowing what was really happening.”

Burton said, “Get your grails. Put anything you want to take along in your sack. We’re leaving as of now. I want to get away before the others awake.”

Alice’s already large eyes became even wider. “Where are we going?”

“Anywhere from here. I don’t like to run away but I can’t stand up and fight people like that. Not if They know where I am. I’ll tell you, however, what I plan to do. I intend to find the end of The River. It must have an inlet and an outlet, and there must be a way for a man to get through to the source. If there’s any way at all, I’ll find it—you can bet your soul on that!

“Meanwhile, They’ll be looking for me elsewhere—I hope. The fact that They didn’t find me here makes me think that They have no means for instantly locating a person. They may have branded us like cattle”—he
indicated the invisible symbols on his forehead—“but even cattle have mavericks. And we’re cattle with brains.”

He turned to the others. “You’re more than welcome to come along with me. In fact, I’d be honored.”

“I’ll get Monat,” Kazz said. “He wouldn’t want to be left behind.”

Burton grimaced and said, “Good old Monat! I hate to do this to him, but there’s no helping it. He can’t come along. He’s too distinguishable. Their agents would have no trouble at all in locating anybody who looked like him. I’m sorry, but he can’t.”

Tears stood in Kazz’s eyes, then ran down his bulging cheekbones. In a choked voice, he said, “Burton-naq, I can’t go either. I look too different, too.”

Burton felt tears wet his own eyes. He said, “We’ll take that chance. After all, there must be plenty of your type around. We’ve seen at least thirty or more during our travels.”

“No females so far, Burton-naq,” Kazz said mournfully. Then he smiled. “Maybe we find one when
we go along The River.”

As quickly, he lost his grin. “No, damn it, I don’t go! I can’t hurt Monat too much. Him and me, others think we ugly and scary-looking. So we become good friends. He’s not my naq, but he’s next to it. I stay.”

He stepped up to Burton, hugged him in a grip that forced Burton’s breath out in a great whoosh, released him, shook hands with the others, making them wince, then turned and shuffled off.

Ruach, holding his paralyzed hand, said, “You’re off on a fool’s errand, Burton. Do you realize that you could sail on this River for a thousand years and still be a million miles or more from the end? I’m staying. My people need me. Besides, Spruce made it clear that we should be striving for a spiritual perfection, not fighting Those Who gave us a chance to do so.”

Burton’s teeth flashed whitely in his dark face. He swung his grail as if it were a weapon.

“I didn’t ask to be put here any more than I asked to be born on Earth. I don’t intend to kowtow to another’s dictates! I mean to find The River’s end. And if I don’t, I will at least have had fun and learned much
By then, people were beginning to stumble out of their huts as they yawned and rubbed heavy eyes. Ruach paid no attention to them; he watched the craft as it set sail close-hauled to the wind, cutting across and up The River. Burton was handling the rudder; he turned once and waved the grail so that the sun bounced off it in many shining spears.

Ruach thought that Burton was really happy that he had been forced to make this decision. Now he could evade the deadly responsibilities that would come with governing this little state and could do what he wanted. He could set out on the greatest of all his adventures.

“I suppose it’s for the best,” Ruach muttered to himself. “A man may find salvation on the road, if he wants to, just as well as he may at home. It’s up to him. Meanwhile, I, like Voltaire’s character—what was his name? Earthly things are beginning to slip away from me—will cultivate my own little garden.”

He paused to look somewhat longingly after Burton. “Who knows? He may some day run into Voltaire.” He sighed, then smiled.
“On the other hand, Voltaire may someday drop in on me!”
hate you, Hermann Göring!”

The voice sprang out and then flashed away as if it were a gear tooth meshed with the cog of another man’s dream and rotated into and then out of his dream.

Riding the crest of the hypnopompic state, Richard Francis Burton knew he was dreaming. But he was helpless to do anything about it.

The first dream returned.

Events were fuzzy and encapsulated. A lightning streak of himself in the unmessurable chamber of floating bodies; another flash of the nameless Custodians finding him and putting him back to sleep; then a jerky synopsis of the dream he had had just before the true Resurrection on the banks of The River.

God—a beautiful old man in the clothes of a mid-Victorian gentleman of means and breeding—was poking him in the ribs with an iron cane and telling him
that he owed for the flesh.

“What? What flesh?” Burton said, dimly aware that he was muttering in his sleep. He could not hear his words in the dream.

“Pay up!” God said. His face melted, then was recast into Burton’s own features.

God had not answered in the first dream five years before. He spoke now, “Make your Resurrection worth my while, you fool! I have gone to great expense and even greater pains to give you, and all those other miserable and worthless wretches, a second chance.”

“Second chance at what?” Burton said. He felt frightened at what God might answer. He was much relieved when God the All-Father—only now did Burton see that one eye of Jahweh-Odin was gone and out of the empty socket glared the flames of hell—did not reply. He was gone—no, not gone but metamorphosed into a high gray tower, cylindrical and soaring out of gray mists with the roar of the sea coming up through the mists.

“The Grail!” He saw again the man who had told him
of the Big Grail. This man had heard it from another man, who had heard of it from a woman, who had heard it from...and so forth. The Big Grail was one of the legends told by the billions who lived along The River—this River that coiled like a serpent around this planet from pole to pole, issued from the unreachable and plunged into the inaccessible.

A man, or a subhuman, had managed to climb through the mountains to the North Pole. And he had seen the Big Grail, the Dark Tower, the Misty Castle just before he had stumbled. Or he was pushed. He had fallen headlong and bellowing into the cold seas beneath the mists and died. And then the man, or subhuman, had awakened again along The River. Death was not forever here, although it had lost nothing of its sting.

He had told of his vision. And the story had traveled along the valley of The River faster than a boat could sail.

Thus, Richard Francis Burton, the eternal pilgrim and wanderer, had longed to storm the ramparts of the Big Grail. He would unveil the secret of resurrection and of this planet, since he was convinced that the beings Who
had reshaped this world had also built that tower.

"Die, Hermann Göring! Die, and leave me in peace!" a man shouted in German.

Burton opened his eyes. He could see nothing except the pale sheen of the multitudinous stars through the open window across the room of the hut.

His vision bent to the shape of the black things inside, and he saw Peter Frigate and Loghu sleeping on their mats by the opposite wall. He turned his head to see the white, blanket-sized towel under which Alice slept. The whiteness of her face was turned toward him, and the black cloud of her hair spilled out on the ground by her mat.

That same evening, the single-masted boat on which he and the other three had been sailing down The River had put into a friendly shore. The little state of Sevieria was inhabited largely by sixteenth-century Englishmen, although its chief was an American who had lived in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. John Sevier, founder of the "lost state" of Franklin, which had later become Tennessee, had welcomed Burton and his party.
Sevier and his people did not believe in slavery and would not detain any guest longer than he desired. After permitting them to charge their grails and so feed themselves, Sevier had invited them to a party. It was the celebration of Resurrection Day; afterward, he had them conducted to the guest hostelry.

Burton was always a light sleeper, and now he was an uneasy one. The others began breathing deeply or snoring long before he had succumbed to weariness. After an interminable dream, he had wakened on hearing the voice that had interlocked with his dreams.

Hermann Göring, Burton thought. He had killed Göring, but Göring must be alive again somewhere along The River. Was the man now groaning and shouting in the neighboring hut one who had also suffered because of Göring, either on Earth or in the Rivervalley?

Burton threw off the black towel and rose swiftly but noiselessly. He secured a kilt with magnetic tabs, fastened a belt of human skin around his waist, and made sure the human-leather scabbard held the flint poignard. Carrying an assegai, a short length of
hardwood tipped with a flint point, he left the hut.

The moonless sky cast a light as bright as the full moon of Earth. It was aflame with huge many-colored stars and pale sheets of cosmic gas.

The hostelries were set back a mile and a half from The River and placed on one of the second row of hills that edged the Riverplain. There were seven of the one-room, leaf-thatch-roofed, bamboo buildings. At a distance, under the enormous branches of the iron trees or under the giant pines or oaks, were other huts. A half-mile away, on top of a high hill, was a large circular stockade, colloquially termed the “Roundhouse.” The officials of Sevieria slept there.

High towers of bamboo were placed every half-mile along The River shore. Torches flamed all night long on platforms from which sentinels kept a lookout for invaders.

After scrutinizing the shadows under the trees, Burton walked a few steps to the hut from which the groans and shouts had come.

He pushed the grass curtain aside. The starlight fell through the open window on the face of the sleeper.
Burton hissed in surprise. The light revealed the blondish hair and the broad features of a youth he recognized.

Burton moved slowly on bare feet. The sleeper groaned and threw one arm over his face and half-turned. Burton stopped, then resumed his stealthy progress. He placed the assegai on the ground, drew his dagger, and gently thrust the point against the hollow of the youth’s throat. The arm flopped over; the eyes opened and stared into Burton’s. Burton clamped his hand over the man’s open mouth.

“Hermann Göring! Don’t move or try to yell! I’ll kill you!”

Göring’s light-blue eyes looked dark in the shadows, but the paleness of his terror shone out. He quivered and started to sit up, then sank back as the flint dug into his skin.

“How long have you been here?” Burton said.

“Who…?” Göring said in English, then his eyes opened even wider. “Richard Burton? Am I dreaming? Is that you?”

Burton could smell the dreamgum on Göring’s breath
and the sweat-soaked mat on which he lay. The German was much thinner than the last time he had seen him.

Göring said, “I don’t know how long I’ve been here. What time is it?”

“About an hour until dawn, I’d say. It’s the day after Resurrection Celebration.”

“Then I’ve been here three days. Could I have a drink of water? My throat’s dry as a sarcophagus.”

“No wonder. You’re a living sarcophagus—if you’re addicted to dreamgum.”

Burton stood up, gesturing with the assegai at a fired-clay pot on a little bamboo table nearby. “You can drink if you want to. But don’t try anything.”

Göring rose slowly and staggered to the table. “I’m too weak to give you a fight even if I wanted to.” He drank noisily from the pot and then picked up an apple from the table. He took a bite, and then said, “What’re you doing here? I thought I was rid of you.”

“You answer my question first,” Burton said, “and be quick about it. You pose a problem that I don’t like,
you know.”
Göring started chewing, stopped, stared, then said, "Why should I? I don’t have any authority here, and I couldn’t do anything to you if I did. I’m just a guest here. Damned decent people, these; they haven’t bothered me at all except to ask if I’m all right now and then. Though I don’t know how long they’ll let me stay without earning my keep."

"You haven’t left the hut?" Burton said. "Then who charged your grail for you? How’d you get so much dreamgum?"

Göring smiled slyly. "I had a big collection from the last place I stayed; somewhere about a thousand miles up The River."

"Doubtless taken forcibly from some poor slaves," Burton said. "But if you were doing so well there, why did you leave?"

Göring began to weep. Tears ran down his face, and over his collarbones and down his chest, and his
shoulders shook.

‘I…I had to get out. I wasn’t any good to the others. I was losing my hold over them—spending too much time drinking, smoking marijuana, and chewing dreamgum. They said I was too soft myself. They would have killed me or made me a slave. So I sneaked out one night…took the boat. I got away all right and kept going until I put into here. I traded part of my supply to Sevier for two weeks’ sanctuary.’

Burton stared curiously at Göring.

“You knew what would happen if you took too much gum,” he said. “Nightmares, hallucinations, delusions. Total mental and physical deterioration. You must have seen it happen to others.”

“I was a morphine addict on Earth!” Göring cried. “I struggled with it, and I won out for a long time. Then, when things began to go badly for the Third Reich—and even worse for myself—when Hitler began picking on me, I started taking drugs again!”

He paused, then continued, ‘But here, when I woke up to a new life, in a young body, when it looked as if I had an eternity of life and youth ahead of me, when
there was no stern God in Heaven or Devil in Hell to
stop me, I thought I could do exactly as I pleased and
get away with it. I would become even greater than the
Führer! That little country in which you first found me
was to be only the beginning! I could see my empire
stretching for thousands of miles up and down The
River, on both sides of the valley. I would have been
the ruler of ten times the subjects that Hitler ever
dreamed of!”

He began weeping again, then paused to take
another drink of water, then put a piece of the
dreamgum in his mouth. He chewed, his face becoming
more relaxed and blissful with each second.

Göring said, “I kept having nightmares of you
plunging the spear into my belly. When I woke up, my
belly would hurt as if a flint had gone into my guts. So
I’d take gum to remove the hurt and the humiliation. At
first, the gum helped. I was great. I was master of the
world, Hitler, Napoleon, Julius Caesar, Alexander,
Genghis Khan, all rolled into one. I was chief again of
von Richthofen’s Red Death Squadron; those were
happy days, the happiest of my life in many ways. But
the euphoria soon gave way to hideousness. I plunged
into hell; I saw myself accusing myself and behind the accuser a million others. Not myself but the victims of that great and glorious hero, that obscene madman Hitler, whom I worshipped so. And in whose name I committed so many crimes.”

“You admit you were a criminal?” Burton said. “That’s a story different than the one you used to give me. Then you said you were justified in all you did, and you were betrayed by the...”

He stopped, realizing that he had been sidetracked from his original purpose. “That you should be haunted with the specter of a conscience is rather incredible. But perhaps that explains what has puzzled the puritans—why liquor, tobacco, marijuana, and dreamgum were offered in the grails along with food. At least, dreamgum seems to be a gift booby-trapped with danger to those who abuse it.”

He stepped closer to Göring. The German’s eyes were half-closed, and his jaw hung open.

“You know my identity. I am traveling under a pseudonym, with good reason. You remember Spruce, one of your slaves? After you were killed, he was
revealed, quite by accident, as one of those who somehow resurrected all the dead of humanity. Those we call the Ethicals, for lack of a better term. Göring, are you listening?"

Göring nodded.

“Spruce killed himself before we could get out of him all we wanted to know. Later, some of his compatriots came to our area and temporarily put everybody to sleep—probably with a gas—intending to take me away to wherever Their headquarters are. But They missed me. I was off on a trading trip up The River. When I returned, I realized They were after me, and I’ve been running ever since. Göring, do you hear me?”

Burton slapped him savagely on his cheek. Göring said, “Ach!” and jumped back and held the side of his face. His eyes were open, and he was grimacing.

“I heard you!” he snarled. “It just didn’t seem worthwhile to answer back. Nothing seemed worthwhile, nothing except floating away, far from. . . .”

“Shut up and listen!” Burton said. “The Ethicals have men everywhere looking for me. I can’t afford to have you alive, do you realize that? I can’t trust you. Even if
you were a friend, you couldn’t be trusted. You’re a gummer!”

Göring giggled, stepped up to Burton and tried to put his arms around Burton’s neck. Burton pushed him back so hard that he staggered up against the table and only kept from falling by clutching its edges.

“This is very amusing,” Göring said. “The day I got here, a man asked me if I’d seen you. He described you in detail and gave your name. I told him I knew you well—too well, and that I hoped I’d never see you again, not unless I had you in my power, that is. He said I should notify him if I saw you again. He’d make it worth my while.”

Burton wasted no time. He strode up to Göring and seized him with both hands. They were small and delicate, but Göring winceded with pain.

He said, “What’re you going to do, kill me again?”

“Not if you tell me the name of the man who asked you about me. Otherwise…. .”

“Go ahead and kill me!” Göring said. “So what? I’ll wake up somewhere else, thousands of miles from here, far out of your reach.”
Burton pointed at a bamboo box in a corner of the hut. Guessing that it held Göring’s supply of gum, he said, “And you’d also wake up without that! Where else could you get so much on such short notice?”

“Damn you!” Göring shouted, and tried to tear himself loose to get to the box.

“Tell me his name!” Burton said. “Or I’ll take the gum and throw it in The River!”

“Agneau. Roger Agneau. He sleeps in a hut just outside the Roundhouse.”

“I’ll deal with you later,” Burton said, and chopped Göring on the side of the neck with the edge of his palm.

He turned, and he saw a man crouching outside the entrance to the hut. The man straightened up and was off. Burton ran out after him; in a minute both were in the tall pines and oaks of the hills. His quarry disappeared in the waist-high grass.

Burton slowed to a trot, caught sight of a patch of white—starlight on bare skin—and was after the fellow. He hoped that the Ethical would not kill himself at once, because he had a plan for extracting information if he
could knock him out at once. It involved hypnosis, but he would have to catch the Ethical first. It was possible that the man had some sort of wireless imbedded in his body and was even now in communication with his compatriots—wherever They were. If so, They would come in Their flying machines, and he would be lost.

He stopped. He had lost his quarry and the only thing to do now was to rouse Alice and the others and run. Perhaps this time they should take to the mountains and hide there for a while.

But first he would go to Agneau’s hut. There was little chance that Agneau would be there, but it was certainly worth the effort to make sure.
Burton arrived within sight of the hut just in time to glimpse the back of a man entering it. Burton circled to come up from the side where the darkness of the hills and the trees scattered along the plain gave him some concealment. Crouching, he ran until he was at the door to the hut.

He heard a loud cry some distance behind him and whirled to see Göring staggering toward him. He was crying out in German to Agneau, warning him that Burton was just outside. In one hand he held a long spear which he brandished at the Englishman.

Burton turned and hurled himself against the flimsy bamboo-slat door. His shoulder drove into it and broke it from its wooden hinges. The door flew inward and struck Agneau, who had been standing just behind it. Burton, the door, and Agneau fell to the floor with Agneau under the door.

Burton rolled off the door, got up, and jumped again
with both bare feet on the wood. Agneau screamed and then became silent. Burton heaved the door to one side to find his quarry unconscious and bleeding from the nose. Good! Now if the noise didn’t bring the watch and if he could deal quickly enough with Göring, he could carry out his plan.

He looked up just in time to see the starlight on the long black object hurtling at him.

He threw himself to one side, and the spear plunged into the dirt floor with a thump. Its shaft vibrated like a rattlesnake preparing to strike.

Burton stepped into the doorway, estimated Göring’s distance, and charged. His assegai plunged into the belly of the German. Göring threw his hands up in the air, screamed, and fell on his side. Burton hoisted Agneau’s limp body on his shoulder and carried him out of the hut.

By then there were shouts from the Roundhouse. Torches were flaring up; the sentinel on the nearest watchtower was bellowing. Göring was sitting on the ground, bent over, clutching the shaft close to the wound.
He looked gape-mouthed at Burton and said, “You did it again! You....”

He fell over on his face, the death rattle in his throat.

Agneau returned to a frenzied consciousness. He twisted himself out of Burton’s grip and fell to the ground. Unlike Göring, he made no noise. He had as much reason to be silent as Burton—more perhaps. Burton was so surprised that he was left standing with the fellow’s loin-towel clutched in his hand. Burton started to throw it down but felt something stiff and square within the lining of the towel. He transferred the cloth to his left hand, yanked the assegai from the corpse, and ran after Agneau.

The Ethical had launched one of the bamboo canoes beached along the shore. He paddled furiously out into the starlit waters, glancing frequently behind him. Burton raised the assegai behind his shoulder and hurled it. It was a short, thick-shafted weapon, designed for infighting and not as a javelin. But if flew straight and came down at the end of its trajectory in Agneau’s back. The Ethical fell forward and at an angle and tipped the narrow craft over. The canoe turned upside
down. Agneau did not reappear.

Burton swore. He had wanted to capture Agneau alive, but he was damned if he would permit the Ethical to escape. There was a chance that Agneau had not contacted other Ethicals yet.

He turned back toward the guest huts. Drums were beating up and down along the shore, and people with burning torches were hastening toward the Roundhouse. Burton stopped a woman and asked if he could borrow her torch a moment. She handed it to him but spouted questions at him. He answered that he thought the Choctaws across The River were making a raid. She hurried off toward the assembly before the stockade.

Burton drove the pointed end of the torch into the soft dirt of the bank and examined the towel he had snatched from Agneau. On the inside, just above the hard square in the lining, was a seam sealed with two thin magnetic strips, easily opened. He took the object out of the lining and looked at it by the torchlight.

For a long time he squatted by the shifting light, unable to stop looking or to subdue an almost
paralyzing astonishment. A photograph, in this world of no cameras, was unheard-of. But a photograph of him was even more incredible, as was the fact that the picture had not been taken on this world! It had to have been made on Earth, that Earth lost now in the welter of stars somewhere in the blazing sky and in God only knew how many thousands of years of time.

Impossibility piled on impossibility! But it was taken at a time and at a place when he knew for certain that no camera had fixed upon him and preserved his image. His mustachios had been removed but the retoucher had not bothered to opaque the background nor his clothing. There he was, caught miraculously from the waist up and imprisoned in a flat piece of some material. Flat! When he turned the square, he saw his profile come into view. If he held it almost at right angles to the eye, he could get a three-quarters profile-view of himself.

"In 1848," he muttered to himself. "When I was a twenty-seven-year-old subaltern in the East Indian Army. And those are the blue mountains of Goa. This must have been taken when I was convalescing there. But, my God, how? By whom? And how would the
Ethicals manage to have it in their possession now?”

Agneau had evidently carried this photo as a mnemonic in his quest for Burton. Probably every one of the hunters had one just like it, concealed in his towel. Up and down The River They were looking for him; there might be thousands, perhaps tens of thousands of Them. Who knew how many agents They had available or how desperately They wanted him or why They wanted him?

After replacing the photo in the towel, he turned to go back to the hut. And at that moment, his gaze turned toward the top of the mountains—those unscalable heights that bounded The Rivervalley on both sides.

He saw something flicker against a bright sheet of cosmic gas. It appeared for only the blink of an eyelid, then was gone.

A few seconds later, it came out of nothing, was revealed as a dark hemispherical object, then disappeared again.

A second flying craft showed itself briefly, reappeared at a lower elevation, and then was gone like the first.
The Ethicals would take him away, and the people of Sevieria would wonder what had made them fall asleep for an hour or so.

He did not have time to return to the hut and wake up the others. If he waited a moment longer, he would be trapped.

He turned and ran into The River and began swimming toward the other shore, a mile and a half away. But he had gone no more than forty yards when he felt the presence of some huge bulk above. He turned on his back to stare upward. There was only the soft glare of the stars above. Then, out of the air, fifty feet above him, a disk with a diameter of about sixty feet cut out a section of the sky. It disappeared almost immediately, came into sight again only twenty feet above him.

So They had some means of seeing at a distance in the night and had spotted him in his flight.

“You jackals!” he shouted at them. “You’ll not get me anyway!”

He upended and dived and swam straight downward. The water became colder, and his
eardrums began to hurt. Although his eyes were open, he could see nothing. Suddenly, he was pushed by a wall of water, and he knew that the pressure came from displacement by a large object.

The craft had plunged down after him.

There was only one way out. They would have his dead body, but that would be all. He could escape Them again, be alive somewhere on The River to outwit Them again and strike back at Them.

He opened his mouth and breathed in deeply through both his nose and his mouth.

The water choked him. Only by a strong effort of will did he keep from closing his lips and trying to fight back against the death around him. He knew with his mind that he would live again, but the cells of his body did not know it. They were striving for life at this very moment, not in the rationalized future. And they forced from his water-choked throat a cry of despair.
Yaaaaaaaah!"

The cry raised him off the grass as if he had bounced up off a trampoline. Unlike the first time he had been resurrected, he was not weak and bewildered. He knew what to expect. He would wake on the grassy banks of The River near a grailstone. But he was not prepared for these giants battling around him.

His first thought was to find a weapon. There was nothing at hand except the grail that always appeared with a resurrectee and the pile of towels of various sizes, colors, and thicknesses. He took one step, seized the handle of the grail, and waited. If he had to, he would use the grail as a club. It was light, but it was practically indestructible and very hard. However, the monsters around him looked as if they could take a battering all day and not feel a thing.

Most of them were at least eight feet tall, some were
surely over nine; their massively muscled shoulders were over three feet broad. Their bodies were human, or nearly so, and their white skins were covered with long reddish or brownish hairs. They were not as hairy as a chimpanzee but more so than any man he had ever seen, and he had known some remarkably hirsute human beings.

But the faces gave them an unhuman and frightening aspect, especially since all were snarling with battle rage. Below a low forehead was a bloom of bone that ran without indentation above the eyes and then continued around to form O’s. Though the eyes were as large as his, they looked small compared to the broad face in which they were set. The cheekbones billowed out and then curved sharply inward. The tremendous noses gave the giants the appearance of proboscis monkeys.

At another time, Burton might have been amused by them. Not now. The roars that tore out of their more-than-gorilla-sized chests were deep as a lion’s, and the huge teeth would have made a Kodiak bear think twice before attacking. Their fists, large as his head, held clubs as thick and as long as wagon poles or stone
axes. They swung their weapons at each other, and when they struck flesh, bones broke with cracks as loud as wood splitting. Sometimes, the clubs broke, too.

Burton had a moment in which to look around. The light was weak. The sun had only half risen above the peaks across The River. The air was far colder than any he had felt on this planet except during his defeated attempts to climb to the top of the perpendicular ranges.

Then one of the victors of a combat looked around for another enemy and saw him.

His eyes widened. For a second, he looked as startled as Burton had when he had first opened his eyes. Perhaps he had never seen such a creature as Burton before, any more than Burton had seen one like him. If so, he did not take long to get over his surprise. He bellowed, jumped over the mangled body of his foe, and ran toward Burton, raising an axe that could have felled an elephant.

Burton also ran, his grail in one hand. If he were to lose that, he might as well die now. Without it, he would starve or have to eke out on fish and bamboo sprouts.
He almost made it. An opening appeared before him, and he sped between two titans, their arms around each other and each straining to throw over the other, and another who was backing away before the rain of blows delivered by the club of a fourth. Just as he was almost through, the two wrestlers toppled over on him.

He was going swiftly enough that he was not caught directly under them, but the flailing arm of one struck his left heel. So hard was the blow, it smashed his foot against the ground and stopped him instantly. He fell forward and began to scream. His foot must have been broken, and he had torn muscles throughout his leg.

Nevertheless, he tried to rise and to hobble on to The River. Once in it, he could swim away, if he did not faint from the agony. He took two hops on his right foot, only to be seized from behind.

He flew up into the air, whirling around, and was caught before he began his descent.

The titan was holding him with one hand at arm’s length, the enormous and powerful fist clutched around Burton’s chest. Burton could hardly breathe; his ribs threatened to cave in.
Despite all this, he had not dropped his grail. Now he struck it against the giant’s shoulder.

Lightly, as if brushing off a fly, the giant tapped the metal container with his axe, and the grail was torn from Burton’s grip.

The behemoth grinned and bent his arm to bring Burton in closer. Burton weighed one hundred and eighty pounds, but the arm did not quiver under the strain.

For a moment, Burton looked directly into the pale blue eyes sunk in the bony circles. The nose was lined with many broken veins. The lips protruded because of the bulging prognathous jaws beneath—not, as he had first thought, because the lips were so thick.

Then the titan bellowed and lifted Burton up above his head. Burton hammered the huge arm with his fists, knowing that it was in vain but unwilling to submit like a caught rabbit. Even as he did so, he noted, though not with the full attention of his mind, several things about the scene.

The sun had been just rising above the mountain peaks when he had first awakened. Although the time
passed since he had jumped to his feet was only a few minutes, the sun should have cleared the peaks. It had not; it hung at exactly the same height as when he had first seen it.

Moreover, the upward slant of the valley permitted a view for at least four miles. The grailstone by him was the last one. Beyond it was only the plain and The River.

This was the end of the line—or the beginning of The River.

There was no time nor desire for him to appreciate what these meant. He merely noted them during the passage between pain, rage, and terror. Then, as the giant prepared to bring his axe around to splinter Burton’s skull, the giant stiffened and shrieked. To Burton, it was like being next to a locomotive whistle. The grip loosened, and Burton fell to the ground. For a moment, he passed out from the pain in his foot.

When he regained consciousness, he had to grind his teeth to keep from yelling again. He groaned and sat up, though not without a race of fire up his leg that made the feeble daylight grow almost black. The battle was
roaring all around him, but he was in a little corner of inactivity. By him lay the tree-trunk-thick corpse of the titan who had been about to kill him. The back of his skull, which looked massive enough to resist a battering ram, was caved in.

Around the elephantine corpse crawled another casualty, on all fours. Seeing him, Burton forgot his pain for a moment. The horribly injured man was Hermann Göring.

Both of them had been resurrected at the same spot. There was no time to think about the implications of the coincidence. His pain began to come back. Moreover, Göring started to talk.

Not that he looked as if he had much talk left in him or much time left to do it in. Blood covered him. His right eye was gone. The corner of his mouth was ripped back to his ear. One of his hands was smashed flat. A rib was sticking through the skin. How he had managed to stay alive, let alone crawl, was beyond Burton’s understanding.

“You...you!” Göring said hoarsely in German, and he collapsed. A fountain poured out of his mouth and
over Burton’s legs; his eyes glazed.

Burton wondered if he would ever know what he had intended to say. Not that it really mattered. He had more vital things to think about.

About ten yards from him, two titans were standing with their backs to him. Both were breathing hard, apparently resting for a moment before they jumped back into the fight. Then one spoke to the other.

There was no doubt about it. The giant was not just uttering cries. He was using a language.

Burton did not understand it, but he knew it was speech. He did not need the modulated, distinctly syllabic reply of the other to confirm his recognition.

So these were not some type of prehistoric ape but a species of subhuman men. They must have been unknown to the twentieth-century science of Earth, since his friend, Frigate, had described to him all the fossils known in A.D. 2008.

He lay down with his back against the fallen giant’s Gothic ribs and brushed some of the long reddish sweaty hairs from his face. He fought nausea and the agony of his foot and the torn muscles of his leg. If he
made too much noise, he might attract those two, and they would finish the job. But what if they did? With his wounds, in a land of such monsters, what chance did he have of surviving?

Worse than his agony of foot, almost, was the thought that, on his first trip on what he called The Suicide Express, he had reached his goal.

He had only an estimated one chance in ten million of arriving at this area, and he might never have made it if he had drowned himself ten thousand times. Yet he had had a fantastically good fortune. It might never occur again. And he was to lose it and very soon.

The sun was moving half-revealed along the tops of the mountains across The River. This was the place that he had speculated would exist; he had come here first shot. Now, as his eyesight failed and the pain lessened, he knew that he was dying. The sickness was born from more than the shattered bones in his foot. He must be bleeding inside.

He tried to rise once more. He would stand, if only on one foot, and shake his fist at the mocking fates and curse them. He would die with a curse on his lips.
The red wing of dawn was lightly touching his eyes.

He rose to his feet, knowing that his wounds would be healed and he would be whole again but not quite believing it. Near him was a grail and a pile of six neatly folded towels of various sizes, colors, and thicknesses.

Twelve feet away, another man, also naked, was rising from the short bright-green grass. Burton’s skin grew cold. The blondish hair, broad face, and light-blue eyes were those of Hermann Göring.

The German looked as surprised as Burton. He spoke slowly, as if coming out of a deep sleep. “There’s something very wrong here.”

“Something foul indeed,” Burton replied. He knew no more of the pattern of resurrection along The River than any other man. He had never seen a resurrection, but he had had them described to him by those who had. At dawn, just after the sun topped the unclimbable
mountains, a shimmering appeared in the air beside a grailstone. In the flicker of a bird’s wing, the distortion solidified, and a naked man or woman or child appeared from nowhere on the grass by the bank. Always the indispensable grail and the towels were by the “lazarus.”

Along a conceivably ten- to twenty-million-mile-long Rivervalley in which an estimated thirty-five to thirty-six billion lived, a million could die per day. It was true that there were no diseases (other than mental) but, though statistics were lacking, a million were probably killed every twenty-four hours by the myriads of wars between the one million or so little states, by crimes of passion, by suicides, by executions of criminals, and by accidents. There was a steady and numerous traffic of those undergoing the “little resurrection,” as it was called.

But Burton had never heard of two dying in the same place and at the same time being resurrected together. The process of selection of area for the new life was random—or so he had always thought.

One such occurrence could conceivably take place,
although the probabilities were one in twenty million. But two such, one immediately after the other, was a miracle.

Burton did not believe in miracles. Nothing happened that could not be explained by physical principles—if you knew all the facts.

He did not know them, so he would not worry about the “coincidence” at the moment. The solution to another problem was more demanding. That was, what was he to do about Göring?

The man knew him and could identify him to any Ethicals searching for him.

Burton looked quickly around him and saw a number of men and women approaching in a seemingly friendly manner. There was time for a few words with the German.

"Göring, I can kill you or myself. But I don’t want to do either—at the moment, anyway. You know why you’re dangerous to me. I shouldn’t take a chance with you, you treacherous hyena. But there’s something different about you, something I can’t put my fingers on. But...."
Göring, who was notorious for his resilience, seemed to be coming out of his shock. He grinned slyly and said, “I do have you over the barrel, don’t I?”

Seeing Burton’s snarl, he hastily put up one hand and said, “But I swear to you I won’t reveal your identity to anyone! Or do anything to hurt you! Maybe we’re not friends, but we at least know each other, and we’re in a land of strangers. It’s good to have one familiar face by your side. I know, I’ve suffered too long from loneliness, from desolation of the spirit. I thought I’d go mad. That’s partly the reason I took to the dreamgum. Believe me, I won’t betray you.”

Burton did not believe him. He did think, however, that he could trust him for a while. Göring would want a potential ally, at least until he took the measure of the people in this area and knew what he could or could not do. Besides, Göring might have changed for the better.

No, Burton said to himself. No. There you go again. Verbal cynic though you are, you’ve always been too forgiving, too ready to overlook injury to yourself and to give your injurer another chance. Don’t be a fool
Three days later, he was still uncertain about Göring.

Burton had taken the identity of Abdul ibn Harun, a nineteenth-century citizen of Cairo, Egypt. He had several reasons for adopting the guise. One was that he spoke excellent Arabic, knew the Cairo dialect of that period, and had an excuse to cover his head with a towel wrapped as a turban. He hoped this would help disguise his appearance. Göring did not say a word to anybody to contradict the camouflage. Burton was fairly sure of this because he and Göring spent most of their time together. They were quartered in the same hut until they adjusted to the local customs and went through their period of probation. Part of this was intensive military training. Burton had been one of the greatest swordsmen of the nineteenth century and also knew every inflection of fighting with weapons or with hands. After a display of his ability in a series of tests, he was welcomed as a recruit. In fact, he was promised that he would be an instructor when he learned the language well enough.

Göring got the respect of the locals almost as swiftly.
Whatever his other faults, he did not lack courage. He was strong and proficient with arms, jovial, likeable when it suited his purpose, and was not far behind Burton in gaining fluency in the language. He was quick to gain and to use authority, as befitted the ex-Reichmarschal of Hitler’s Germany.

This section of the western shore was populated largely by speakers of a language totally unknown even to Burton, a master linguist both on Earth and on the Riverplanet. When he had learned enough to ask questions, he deduced that they must have lived somewhere in Central Europe during the Early Bronze Age. They had some curious customs, one of which was copulation in public. This was interesting enough to Burton, who had co-founded the Royal Anthropological Society in London in 1863 and who had seen strange things during his explorations on Earth. He did not participate, but neither was he horrified.

A custom he did adopt joyfully was that of stained whiskers. The males resented the fact that their face hair had been permanently removed by the Resurrectors, just as their prepuces had been cut off. They could do nothing about the latter outrage, but they could correct
the former to a degree. They smeared their upper lips and chins with a dark liquid made from finely ground charcoal, fish glue, oak tannin, and several other ingredients. The more dedicated used the dye as a tattoo and underwent a painful and long-drawn-out pricking with a sharp bamboo needle.

Now Burton was doubly disguised, yet he had put himself at the mercy of the man who might betray him at the first opportunity. He wanted to attract an Ethical but did not want the Ethical to be certain of his identity.

Burton wanted to make sure that he could get away in time before being scooped up in the net. It was a dangerous game, like walking a tightrope over a pit of hungry wolves, but he wanted to play it. He would run only when it became absolutely necessary. The rest of the time, he would be the hunted hunting the hunter.

Yet the vision of the Dark Tower, or the Big Grail, was always on the horizon of every thought. Why play cat and mouse when he might be able to storm the very ramparts of the castle within which he presumed the Ethicals had headquarters? Or, if stormed was not the correct description, steal into the tower, effect entrance
as a mouse does into a house—or a castle. While the cats were looking elsewhere, the mouse would be sneaking into the Tower, and there the mouse might turn into a tiger.

At this thought, he laughed, getting curious stares from his two hutmates: Göring and the seventeenth-century Englishman, John Collop. His laugh was half-ridicule of himself at the tiger image. What made him think that he, one man, could do anything to hurt the Planet-Shapers, Resurrectors of billions of dead, Feeders and Maintainers of those summoned back to life? He twisted his hands and knew that within them, and within the brain that guided them, could be the downfall of the Ethicals. What this fearful thing was that he harbored within himself, he did not know. But They feared him. If he could only find out why...

His laugh was only partly self-ridicule. The other half of him believed that he was a tiger among men. **As a man thinks, so is he,** he muttered.

Göring said, “You have a very peculiar laugh, my friend. Somewhat feminine for such a masculine man. It’s like...like a thrown rock skipping over a lake of
ice. Or like a jackal.”

“I have something of the jackal and hyena in me,” Burton replied. “So my detractors maintained—and they were right. But I am more than that.”

He rose from his bed and began to exercise to work the sleep-rust from his muscles. In a few minutes, he would go with the others to a grailstone by the Riverbank and charge his grail. Afterward, there would be an hour of policing the area. Then drill, followed by instruction in the spear, the club, the sling, the obsidian-edged sword, the bow and arrow, the flint axe, and in fighting with bare hands and feet. An hour for rest and talk and lunch. Then an hour in a language class. A two-hour work stint in helping build the ramparts that marked the boundaries of this little state. A half-hour rest, then the obligatory mile run to build stamina. Dinner from the grails, and the evening off except for those who had guard duty or other tasks.

Such a schedule and such activities were being duplicated in tiny states up and down The River’s length. Almost everywhere, mankind was at war or preparing for it. The citizens must keep in shape and
know how to fight to the best of their abilities. The exercises also kept the citizens occupied. No matter how monotonous the martial life, it was better than sitting around wondering what to do for amusement. Freedom from worry about food, rent, bills, and the gnatlike chores and duties that had kept Earthmen busy and fretful was not all a blessing. There was the great battle against ennui, and the leaders of each state were occupied trying to think up ways to keep their people busy.

It should have been paradise in Rivervalley, but it was war, war, war. Other things aside, however, war was, in this place, good (according to some)! It gave savor to life and erased boredom. Man's greediness and aggressiveness had its worthwhile side.

After dinner, every man and woman was free to do what he wished, as long as he broke no local laws. He could barter the cigarettes and liquor provided by his grail or the fish he'd caught in The River for a better bow and arrows; shields; bowls and cups; tables and chairs; bamboo flutes; clay trumpets; human or fishskin drums; rare stones (which really were rare); necklaces made of the beautifully articulated and colored bones of
the deep-River fish, or jade or of carved wood; obsidian mirrors; sandals and shoes; charcoal drawings; the rare and expensive bamboo paper; ink and fishbone pens; hats made from the long tough-fibered hill-grass; bull-roarers; little wagons on which to ride down the hillsides; harps made from wood with strings fashioned from the gut of the "dragonfish"; rings of oak for fingers and toes; clay statuettes; and other devices, useful or ornamental.

Later, of course, there was the love-making Burton and his hutmates were denied, for the time being. Only when they had been accepted as full citizens would they be allowed to move into separate houses and live with a woman.

John Collop was a short, slight youth with long yellow hair, a narrow but pleasant face, and large blue eyes with very long, upcurving, black eyelashes. In his first conversation with Burton, he had said, after introducing himself, "I was delivered from the darkness of my mother's womb—who else?—into the light of God of Earth in 1625. Far too quickly, I descended again into the womb of Mother Nature, confident in the hope of resurrection and not disappointed, as you see."
Though I must confess that this afterlife is not that which the parsons led me to expect. But then, how should they know the truth, poor blind devils leading the blind!”

It was not long before Collop told him that he was a member of the Church of the Second Chance.

Burton’s eyebrows rose. He had encountered this new religion at many places along The River. Burton, though an infidel, made it his business to investigate thoroughly every religion. Know a man’s faith, and you knew at least half the man. Know his wife, and you knew the other half.

The Church had a few simple tenets, some based on fact, most on surmise and hope and wish. In this they differed from no religions born on Earth. But the Second Chancers had one advantage over any Terrestrial religion. They had no difficulty in proving that dead men could be raised—not only once but often.

“And why has mankind been given a Second Chance?” Collop said in his low, earnest voice. “Does he deserve it? No. With few exceptions, men are a mean, miserable, petty, vicious, narrow-minded, exceedingly egotistic, generally disputing, and disgusting
lot. Watching them, the gods—or God—should vomit. But in this divine spew is a clot of compassion, if you will pardon me for using such imagery. Man, however base, has a silver wire of the divine in him. It is no idle phrase that man was made in God’s image. There is something worth saving in the worst of us, and out of this something a new man may be fashioned.

“Whoever has given us this new opportunity to save our souls knows this truth. We have been placed here in this Rivervalley—on this alien planet under alien skies—to work out our salvation. What our time limit is, I do not know nor do the leaders of my Church even speculate. Perhaps it is forever, or it may be only a hundred years or a thousand. But we must make use of whatever time we do have, my friend.”

Burton said, “Weren’t you sacrificed on the altar of Odin by Norse who clung to the old religion, even if this world isn’t the Valhalla they were promised by their priests? Don’t you think you wasted your time and breath by preaching to them? They believe in the same old gods, the only difference in their theology now being some adjustments they’ve made to conditions here. Just as you have clung to your old faith.”
“The Norse have no explanations for their new surroundings,” Collop said, “but I do. I have a reasonable explanation, one which the Norse will eventually come to accept, to believe in as fervently as I do. They killed me, but some more persuasive member of the Church will come along and talk to them before they stretch him out in the wooden lap of their wooden idol and stab him in the heart. If he does not talk them out of him, the next missionary will.

“It was true, on Earth, that the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church. It is even truer here. If you kill a man to shut his mouth, he pops up someplace elsewhere along The River. And a man who has been martyred a hundred thousand miles away comes along to replace the previous martyr. The Church will win out in the end. Then men will cease these useless, hate-generating wars and begin the real business, the only worthwhile business, that of gaining salvation.”

“What you say about the martyrs is true about anyone with an idea,” Burton said. “A wicked man who’s killed also pops up to commit his evil elsewhere.”

“Good will prevail; the truth always wins out,” Collop
“I don’t know how restricted your mobility was on Earth or how long your life,” Burton said, “but both must have been very limited to make you so blind. I know better.”

Collop said, “The Church is not founded on faith alone. It has something very factual, very substantial, on which to base its teachings. Tell me, my friend Abdul, have you ever heard of anybody being resurrected dead?"

“A paradox!” Burton cried. “What do you mean—resurrected dead?”

“There are at least three authenticated cases and four more of which the Church has heard but has not been able to validate. These are men and women who were killed at one place on The River and translated to another. Strangely, their bodies were re-created, but they were without the spark of life. Now, why was this?”

“I can’t imagine!” Burton said. “You tell me. I listen, for you speak as one with authority.”

He could imagine, since he had heard the same story
elsewhere. But he wanted to learn if Collop’s story matched the others. It was the same, even to the names of the dead lazari. The story was that these men and women had been identified by those who had known them well on Earth. They were all saintly or near-saintly people; in fact, one of them had been canonized on Earth. The theory was that they had attained that state of sanctity which made it no longer necessary to go through the “purgatory” of the Riverplanet. Their souls had gone on to...someplace...and left the excess baggage of their physical bodies behind.

Soon, so the Church said, more would reach this state. And their bodies would be left behind. Eventually, given enough time, the Rivervalley would become depopulated. All would have shed themselves of their viscousnesses and hates and would have become illuminated with the love of mankind and of God. Even the most depraved, those who seemed to be utterly lost, would be able to abandon their physical beings. All that was needed to attain this grace was love.

Burton sighed, laughed loudly, and said, “Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose. Another fairy tale to give men hope. The old religions have been
discredited—although some refuse to face even that fact—so new ones must be invented.”

“It makes sense,” Collop said. “Do you have a better explanation of why we’re here?”

“Perhaps. I can make up fairy tales, too.”

As a matter of fact, Burton did have an explanation. However, he could not tell it to Collop. Spruce had told Burton something of the identity, history, and purpose of his group, the Ethicals. Much of what he had said agreed with Collop’s theology.

Spruce had killed himself before he had explained about the “soul.” Presumably, the “soul” had to be part of the total organization of resurrection. Otherwise, when the body had attained “salvation,” and no longer lived, there would be nothing to carry on the essential part of a man. Since the post-Terrestrial life could be explained in physical terms, the “soul” must also be a physical entity, not to be dismissed with the term “supernatural” as it had been on Earth.

There was much that Burton did not know. But he had had a glimpse into the workings of this Riverplanet that no other human being possessed.
With the little knowledge he did have, he planned to lever his way into more, to pry open the lid, and crawl inside the sanctum. To do so, he would attain the Dark Tower. The only way to get there swiftly was to take The Suicide Express. First, he must be discovered by an Ethical. Then he must overpower the Ethical, render him unable to kill himself, and somehow extricate more information from him.

Meanwhile, he continued to play the role of Abdul ibn Harun, translated and transplanted Egyptian physician of the nineteenth century, now a citizen of Bargawhdzys. As such, he decided to join the Church of the Second Chance. He announced to Collop his disillusionment in Mahomet and his teachings, and so became Collop’s first convert in this area.

"Then you must swear not to take arms against any man nor to defend yourself physically, my dear friend," Collop said.

Burton, outraged, said that he would allow no man to strike at him and go unharmed.

"'Tis not unnatural," Collop said gently. "Contrary to habit, yes. But a man may become something other than
he has been, something better—if he has the strength of will and the desire.”

Burton rapped out a violent no and stalked away. Collop shook his head sadly, but he continued to be as friendly as ever. Not without a sense of humor, he sometimes addressed Burton as his “five-minute convert,” not meaning the time it took to bring him into the fold but the time it took Burton to leave the fold.

At this time, Collop got his second convert, Göring. The German had had nothing but sneers and jibes for Collop. Then he began chewing dreamgum again, and the nightmares started.

For two nights he kept Collop and Burton awake with his groanings, his tossings, his screams. On the evening of the third day, he asked Collop if he would accept him into the Church. However, he had to make a confession. Collop must understand what sort of person he had been, both on Earth and on this planet.

Collop heard out the mixture of self-abasement and self-aggrandizement. Then he said, “Friend, I care not what you may have been. Only what you are and what you will be. I listened only because confession is good
for the soul. I can see that you are deeply troubled, that you have suffered sorrow and grief for what you have done, yet take some pleasure in what you once were, a mighty figure among men. Much of what you told me I do not comprehend, because I know not much about your era. Nor does it matter. Only today and tomorrow need to be our concern; each day will take care of itself.”

It seemed to Burton not that Collop did not care what Göring had been but that he did not believe his story of Earthly glory and infamy. There were so many phonies that genuine heroes, or villains, had been depreciated. Thus, Burton had met three Jesus Christ, two Abrahams, four King Richard the Lion-Hearteds, six Attilas, a dozen Judases (only one of whom could speak Aramaic), a George Washington, two Lord Byrons, three Jesse Jameses, any number of Napoleons, a General Custer (who spoke with a heavy Yorkshire accent), a Finn MacCool (who did not know ancient Irish), a Tchaka (who spoke the wrong Zulu dialect), and a number of others who might or might not have been what they claimed to be.

Whatever a man had been on Earth, he had to
reestablish himself here. This was not easy, because conditions were radically altered. The greats and the importants of Terra were constantly being humiliated in their claims and denied a chance to prove their identities.

To Collop, the humiliation was a blessing. First, humiliation, then humility, he would have said. And then comes humanity as a matter of course.

Göring had been trapped in the Great Design—as Burton termed it—because it was his nature to overindulge, especially with drugs. Knowing that the dreamgum was uprooting the dark things in his personal abyss, was spewing them up into the light, that he was being torn apart, fragmented, he still continued to chew as much as he could get. For a while, temporarily made healthful again with a new resurrection, he had been able to deny the call of the drug. But a few weeks after his arrival in this area, he had succumbed, and now the night was ripped apart with his shrieks of “Hermann Göring, I hate you!”

“If this continues,” Burton said to Collop, “he will go mad. Or he will kill himself again, or force someone to
kill him, so that he can get away from himself. But the suicide will be useless, and it’s all to do over again. Tell me truly now, is this not hell?”

“Purgatory, rather,” Collop said. “Purgatory is hell with hope.”
Two months passed. Burton marked the days off on a pine stick notched with a flint knife. This was the fourteenth day of the seventh month of 5 A.R., the fifth year After the Resurrection. Burton tried to keep a calendar, for he was, among many other things, a chronicler. But it was difficult. Time did not mean much on The River. The planet had a polar axis that was always at ninety degrees to the ecliptic. There was no change of seasons, and the stars seemed to jostle each other and made identification of individual luminaries or of constellations impossible. So many and so bright were they that even the noonday sun at its zenith could not entirely dim the greatest of them. Like ghosts reluctant to retreat before daylight, they hovered in the burning air.

Nevertheless, man needs time as a fish needs water. If he does not have it, he will invent it; so to Burton, it was July 14, 5 A.R.
But Collop, like many, reckoned time as having continued from the year of his Terrestrial death. To him, it was A.D. 1667. He did not believe that his sweet Jesus had become sour. Rather, this River was the River Jordan; this valley, the vale beyond the shadow of death. He admitted that the afterlife was not that which he had expected. Yet it was evidence of the all-encompassing love of God for His creation. He had given all men, altogether undeserving of such a gift, another chance. If this world was not the New Jerusalem, it was a place prepared for its building. Here the bricks, which were the love of God, and the mortar, love for man, must be fashioned in this kiln and this mill: the planet of The River of The Valley.

Burton pooh-poohed the concept, but he could not help loving the little man. Collop was genuine; he was not stoking the furnace of his sweetness with leaves from a book or pages from a theology. He did not operate under forced draft. He burned with a flame that fed on his own being, and this being was love. Love even for the unlovable, the rarest and most difficult species of love.
He told Burton something of this Terrestrial life. He had been a doctor, a farmer, a liberal with unshakable faith in his religion, yet full of questions about his faith and the society of his time. He had written a plea for religious tolerance which had aroused both praise and damnation in his time. And he had been a poet, well-known for a short time, then forgotten.

Lord, let the faithless see
Miracles ceased, revive in me.
The leper cleansed, blind healed,
dead raised by Thee.

“My lines may have died, but their truth has not,” he said to Burton. He waved his hand to indicate the hills, The River, the mountains, the people. “As you may see if you open your eyes and do not persist in this stubborn myth of yours that this is the handiwork of men like us.”

He continued, “Or grant your premise. It still remains that these Ethicals are but doing the work of Their Creator.”
“I like better those other lines of yours,” Burton said.

*Dull soul aspire;*  
*Thou are not the Earth. Mount higher!*  
*Heaven gave the spark;*  
*to it return the fire.*

Collop was pleased, not knowing that Burton was thinking of the lines in a different sense than that intended by the poet.

“Return the fire.”

That meant somehow getting into the Dark Tower, discovering the secrets of the Ethicals, and turning Their devices against Them. He did not feel gratitude because They had given him a second life. He was outraged that They should do this without his leave. If They wanted his thanks, why did They not tell him why They had given him another chance? What reason did They have for keeping Their motives in the dark? He would find out why. The spark They had restored in him would turn into a raging fire to burn Them.
He cursed the fate that had propelled him to a place so near the source of The River, hence so close to the Tower, and in a few minutes had carried him away again, back to some place in the middle of The River, millions of miles away from his goal. Yet, if he had been there once, he could get there again. Not by taking a boat, since the journey would consume at least forty years and probably more. He could also count on being captured and enslaved a thousand times over. And if he were killed along the way, he might find himself raised again far from his goal and have to start all over again.

On the other hand, given the seemingly random selection of resurrection, he might find himself once more near The River’s mouth. It was this that determined him to board The Suicide Express once more. However, even though he knew that his death would be only temporary, he found it difficult to take the necessary step. His mind told him that death was the only ticket, but his body rebelled. The cells’ fierce insistence on survival overcame his will.

For a while, he rationalized that he was interested in studying the customs and languages of the prehistorics among whom he was living. Then honesty triumphed,
and he knew he was only looking for excuses to put off the Grim Moment. Despite this, he did not act.

Burton, Collop, and Göring were moved out of their bachelor barracks to take up the normal life of citizens. Each took up residence in a hut, and within a week had found a woman to live with him. Collop's Church did not require celibacy. A member could take an oath of chastity if he wished to. But the Church reasoned that men and women had been Resurrected in bodies that retained the full sex of the original. (Or, if lacking on Earth, supplied here.) It was evident that the Makers of Resurrection had meant for sex to be used. It was well-known, though still denied by some, that sex had other functions than reproduction. So go ahead, youths, roll in the grass.

Another result of the inexorable logic of the Church (which, by the way, decried reason as being untrustworthy) was that any form of love was allowed, as long as it was voluntary and did not involve cruelty or force. Exploitation of children was forbidden. This was a problem that, given time, would cease to exist. In a few years all children would be adults.
Collop refused to have a hutmate solely to relieve his sexual tensions. He insisted on a woman whom he loved. Burton jibed at him for this, saying that it was a prerequisite easily—therefore cheaply—fulfilled. Collop loved all humanity; hence, he should theoretically take the first woman who would say yes to him.

“As a matter of fact, my friend,” Collop said, “that is exactly what happened.”

“It’s only a coincidence that she’s beautiful, passionate, and intelligent?” Burton said.

“Though I strive to be more than human, rather, to become a complete human, I am all-too-human,” Collop replied. He smiled. “Would you have me deliberately martyr myself by choosing an ugly shrew?”

“I’d think you more of a fool than I do even now,” Burton said. “As for me, all I require in a woman is beauty and affection. I don’t care a whit about her brains. And I prefer blonds. There’s a chord within me that responds to the fingers of a golden-haired woman.”

Göring took into his hut a Valkyrie, a tall, great-busted, wide-shouldered, eighteenth-century Swede. Burton wondered if she was a surrogate for Göring’s
first wife, the sister-in-law of the Swedish explorer Count von Rosen. Göring admitted that she not only looked like his Karin but even had a voice similar to hers. He seemed to be very happy with her and she with him.

Then, one night, during the invariable early morning rain, Burton was ripped from a deep sleep.

He thought he had heard a scream, but all he could hear when he became fully awake was the explosion of thunder and the crack of nearby lightning. He closed his eyes, only to be jerked upright again. A woman had screamed in a nearby hut.

He jumped up, shoved aside the bamboo-slat door, and stuck his head outside. The cold rain hit him in the face. All was dark except for the mountains in the west, lit up by flashes of lightning. Then a bolt struck so close that he was deafened and dazzled. However, he did catch a glimpse of two ghostly white figures just outside Göring’s hut. The German had his hands locked around the throat of his woman, who was holding onto his wrists and trying to push him away.

Burton ran out, slipped on the wet grass, and fell.
Just as he arose, another flash showed the woman on her knees, bending backward, and Göring’s distorted face above her. At the same time, Collop, wrapping a towel around his waist, came out of his hut. Burton got to his feet and, still silent, ran again. But Göring was gone. Burton knelt by Karla, felt her heart, and could detect no beat. Another glare of lightning showed him her face, mouth hanging open, eyes bulging.

He rose and shouted, “Göring! Where are you?”

Something struck the back of his head. He fell on his face.

Stunned, he managed to get to his hands and knees, only to be knocked flat again by another heavy blow. Half-conscious, he nevertheless rolled over on his back and raised his legs and hands to defend himself. Lightning revealed Göring standing above him with a club in one hand. His face was a madman’s.

Darkness sliced off the lightning. Something white and blurred leaped upon Göring out of the darkness. The two pale bodies went down onto the grass beside Burton and rolled over and over. They screeched like tomcats, and another flash of lightning showed them
clawing at each other.

Burton staggered to his feet and lurched toward them but was knocked down by Collop’s body, hurled by Göring. Again Burton got up. Collop bounded to his feet and charged Göring. There was a loud crack, and Collop crumpled. Burton tried to run toward Göring. His legs refused to answer his demands; they took him off at an angle, away from his point of attack. Then another blast of light and noise showed Göring, as if caught in a photograph, suspended in the act of swinging the club at Burton.

Burton felt his arm go numb as it received the impact of the club. Now not only his legs but his left arm disobeyed him. Nevertheless he balled his right hand and tried to swing at Göring. There was another crack; his ribs felt as if they had become unhinged and were driven inward into his lung. His breath was knocked out of him, and once again he was on the cold wet grass.

Something fell by his side. Despite his agony, he reached out for it. The club was in his hand; Göring must have dropped it. Shuddering with each painful breath, he got to one knee. Where was the madman?
Two shadows danced and blurred, merged and half-separated. The hut! His eyes were crossed. He wondered if he had a concussion of the brain, then forgot it as he saw Göring dimly in the illumination of a distant streak of lightning. Two Görings, rather. One seemed to accompany the other; the one on the left had his feet on the ground; the right one was treading on air.

Both had their hands held high up into the rain, as if they were trying to wash them. And when the two turned and came toward him, he understood that that was what they were trying to do. They were shouting in German (with a single voice), “Take the blood off my hands! Oh, God, wash it off!”

Burton stumbled toward Göring, his club held high. Burton meant to knock him out, but Göring suddenly turned and ran away. Burton followed him as best he could, down the hill, up another one, and then out onto the flat plain. The rains stopped, the thunder and lightning died, and within five minutes the clouds, as always, had cleared away. The starlight gleamed on Göring’s white skin.

Like a phantom he flitted ahead of his pursuer,
seemingly bent upon getting to The River. Burton kept after him, although he wondered why he was doing so. His legs had regained most of their strength, and his vision was no longer double. Presently, he found Göring. He was squatting by The River and staring intently at the star-fractured waves.

Burton said, “Are you all right now?”

Göring was startled. He began to rise, then changed his mind. Groaning, he put his head down on his knees.

“I knew what I was doing, but I didn’t know why,” he said dully. “Karla was telling me she was moving out in the morning, said she couldn’t sleep with all the noise I made with my nightmares. And I was acting strangely. I begged her to stay; I told her I loved her very much. I’d die if she deserted me. She said she was fond of me, had been, rather, but she didn’t love me. Suddenly, it seemed that if I wanted to keep her, I’d have to kill her. She ran screaming out of the hut. You know the rest.”

“I intended to kill you,” Burton said. “But I can see you’re no more responsible than a madman. The people here won’t accept that excuse, though. You know what
they’ll do to you; hang you upside down by your ankles and let you hang until you die."

Göring cried, “I don’t understand it! What’s happening to me? Those nightmares! Believe me, Burton, if I’ve sinned, I’ve paid! But I can’t stop paying! My nights are hell, and soon my days will become hell, too! Then I’ll have only one way to get peace! I’ll kill myself! But it won’t do any good! I’ll wake up—then hell again!”

“Stay away from the dreamgum,” Burton said. “You’ll have to sweat it out. You can do it. You told me you overcame the morphine habit on Earth.”

Göring stood up and faced Burton. “That’s just it! I haven’t touched the gum since I came to this place!”

Burton said, “What? But I’ll swear...!”

“You assumed I was using the stuff because of the way I was acting! No, I have not had a bit of the gum! But it doesn’t make any difference!”

Despite his loathing of Göring, Burton felt pity. He said, “You’ve opened the Pandora of yourself, and it looks as if you’ll not be able to shut the lid. I don’t know how this is going to end, but I wouldn’t want to
be in your mind. Not that you don’t deserve this.”

Göring said, in a quiet and determined voice, “I’ll defeat them.”

“You mean you’ll conquer yourself,” Burton said. He turned to go but halted for a last word. “What are you going to do?”

Göring gestured at The River. “Drown myself. I’ll get a fresh start. Maybe I’ll be better equipped the next place. And I certainly don’t want to be trussed up like a chicken in a butcher shop window.”

“Au revoir, then,” Burton said. “And good luck.”

“Thank you. You know you’re not a bad sort. Just one word of advice.”

“What’s that?”

“You’d better stay away from the dreamgum yourself. So far, you’ve been lucky. But one of these days, it’ll take hold of you as it did me. Your devils won’t be mine, but they’ll be just as monstrous and terrifying to you.”

“Nonsense! I’ve nothing to hide from myself!” Burton laughed loudly. “I’ve chewed enough of the stuff
to know."

He walked away, but he was thinking of the warning. He had used the gum twenty-two times. Each time had made him swear never to touch the gum again.

On the way back to the hills, he looked behind him. The dim white figure of Göring was slowly sinking into the black-and-silver waters of The River. Burton saluted, since he was not one to resist the dramatic gesture. Afterward, he forgot Göring. The pain in the back of his head, temporarily subdued, came back sharper than before. His knees turned to water, and, only a few yards from his hut, he had to sit down.

He must have become unconscious then, or half-conscious since he had no memory of being dragged along the grass. When his wits cleared, he found himself lying on a bamboo bed inside a hut.

It was dark with the only illumination the starlight filtering in through the tree branches outside the square of window. He turned his head and saw the shadowy and pale-white bulk of a man squatting by him. The man was holding a thin metal object before his eyes, the gleaming end of which was pointed at Burton.
As soon as Burton turned his head, the man put the device down. He spoke in English. “It’s taken me a long time to find you, Richard Burton.”

Burton groped around on the floor for a weapon with his left hand, which was hidden from the man’s view. His fingers touched nothing but dirt. He said, “Now you’ve found me, you damn Ethical, what do you intend doing with me?”

The man shifted slightly and he chuckled. “Nothing.” He paused, then said, “I am not one of Them.” He laughed again when Burton gasped. “That’s not quite true. I am with Them, but I am not of Them.”

He picked up the device which he had been aiming at Burton.

“This tells me that you have a fractured skull and a concussion of the brain. You must be very tough, because you should be dead, judging from the extent of the injury. But you may pull out of it, if you take it easy.
Unfortunately, you don’t have time to convalesce. The Others know you’re in this area, give or take thirty miles. In a day or so, They’ll have you pinpointed.”

Burton tried to sit up and found that his bones had become soft as taffy in sunlight, and a bayonet was prying open the back of his skull. Groaning, he lay back down.

“Who are you and what’s your business?”

“I can’t tell you my name. If—or much more likely when—They catch you, They’ll thread out your memory and run it off backward to the time you woke up in the preresurrection bubble. They won’t find out what made you wake before your time. But They will know about this conversation. They’ll even be able to see me but only as you see me, a pale shadow with no features. They’ll hear my voice too, but They won’t recognize it. I’m using a transmuter.

“They will, however, be horrified. What they have slowly and reluctantly been suspecting will all of a sudden be revealed as the truth. They have a traitor in Their midst.”

“I wish I knew what you were talking about,” Burton
The man said, “I’ll tell you this much. You have been told a monstrous lie about the purpose of the Resurrection. What Spruce told you, and what that Ethical creation, the Church of the Second Chance, teaches—are lies! All lies! The truth is that you human beings have been given life again only to participate in a scientific experiment. The Ethicals—a misnomer if there ever was one—have reshaped this planet into one Rivervalley, built the grailstones, and brought all of you back from the dead for one purpose. To record your history and customs. And, as a secondary matter, to observe your reactions to Resurrection and to the mixing of different peoples of different eras. That is all it is: a scientific project. And when you have served your purpose, back into the dust you go!

“This story about giving all of you another chance at eternal life and salvation because it is Their ethical duty—lies! Actually, my people do not believe that you are worth saving. They do not think you have ‘souls’!”

Burton was silent for a while. The fellow was certainly sincere. Or, if not sincere, he was very
emotionally involved, since he was breathing so heavily.

Finally, Burton spoke. “I can’t see anybody going to all this expense and labor just to run a scientific experiment, or to make historical recordings.”

“Time hangs heavy on the hands of immortals. You would be surprised what we do to make eternity interesting. Furthermore, given all time, we can take our time, and we do not let even the most staggering projects dismay us. After the last Terrestrial died, the job of setting up the Resurrection took several thousands of years, even though the final phase took only one day.”

Burton said, “And you? What are you doing? And why are you doing whatever you’re doing?”

“I am the only true Ethical in the whole monstrous race! I do not like toying around with you as if you were puppets, or mere objects to be observed, animals in a laboratory! After all, primitive and vicious though you be, you are sentients! You are, in a sense, as... as....”

The shadowy speaker waved a shadowy hand as if trying to grasp a word out of the darkness. He
continued, “I’ll have to use your term for yourselves. You’re as human as we. Just as the subhumans who first used language were as human as you. And you are our forefathers. For all I know, I may be your direct descendant. My whole people could be descended from you.”

“I doubt it,” Burton said. “I had no children—that I know of, anyway.”

He had many questions, and he began to ask them. But the man was paying no attention. He was holding the device to his forehead. Suddenly, he withdrew it and interrupted Burton in the middle of a sentence. “I’ve been...you don’t have a word for it...let’s say...listening. They’ve detected my...wathan...I think you’d call it an aura. They don’t know whose wathan, just that it’s an Ethical’s. But They’ll be zeroing in within the next five minutes. I have to go.”

The pale figure stood up. “You have to go, too.”

“Where are you taking me?” Burton said.

“I’m not. You must die; They must find only your corpse. I can’t take you with me; it’s impossible. But if you die here, They’ll lose you again. And we’ll meet
“Wait!” Burton said. “I don’t understand. Why can’t They locate me? They built the Resurrection machinery. Don’t They know where my particular resurrector is?”

The man chuckled again. “No. Their only recordings of men on Earth were visual, not audible. And the location of the resurrectees in the preresurrection bubble was random, since They had planned to scatter you humans along The River in a rough chronological sequence but with a certain amount of mixing. They intended to get down to the individual basis later. Of course, They had no notion then that I would be opposing Them. Or that I would select certain of Their subjects to aid me in defeating the Plan. So They do not know where you, or the others, will next pop up.

“Now, you may be wondering why I can’t set your resurrector so that you’ll be translated near your goal, the headwaters. The fact is that I did set yours so that the first time you died, you’d be at the very first grailstone. But you didn’t make it; so I presume the Titanthrops killed you. That was unfortunate, since I no longer dare to go near the bubble until I have an excuse.”
It is forbidden for any but those authorized to enter the preresorssurrection bubble. They are suspicious; They suspect tampering. So it is up to you, and to chance, to get back to the north polar region.

“As for the others, I never had an opportunity to set their resurrectors. They have to go by the laws of probabilities, too. Which are about twenty million to one.”

“Others?” Burton said. “Others? But why did you choose us?”

“You have the right aura. So did the others. Believe me, I know what I’m doing; I chose well.”

“But you intimated that you woke me up ahead of time...in the preresorssurrection bubble, for a purpose. What did it accomplish?”

“It was the only thing that would convince you that the Resurrection was not a supernatural event. And it started you sniffing on the track of the Ethicals. Am I right? Of course, I am. Here!”

He handed Burton a tiny capsule. “Swallow this. You will be dead instantly and out of Their reach—for a while. And your brain cells will be so ruptured They’ll
not be able to read them. Hurry! I must go!”

“What if I don’t take it?” Burton said. “What if I allow Them to capture me now?”

“You don’t have the aura for it,” the man said.

Burton almost decided not to take the capsule. Why should he allow this arrogant fellow to order him around?

Then he considered that he should not bite off his nose to spite his face. As it was, he had the choice of playing along with this unknown man or of falling into the hands of the Others.

“All right,” he said, “but why don’t you kill me? Why make me do the job?’’

The man laughed and said, “There are certain rules in this game, rules that I don’t have time to explain. But you are intelligent, you’ll figure out most of them for yourself. One is that we are Ethicals. We can give life, but we can’t directly take life. It is not unthinkable for us or beyond our ability. Just very difficult.”

Abruptly, the man was gone. Burton did not hesitate. He swallowed the capsule. There was a blinding flash.
And light was full in his eyes, from the just-risen sun. He had time for one quick look around, saw his grail, his pile of neatly folded towels—and Hermann Göring.

Then Burton and the German were seized by small dark men with large heads and bandy legs. These carried spears and flint-headed axes. They wore towels but only as capes secured around their thick short necks. Strips of leather, undoubtedly human skin, ran across their disproportionately large foreheads and around their heads to bind their long, coarse black hair. They looked semi-Mongolian and spoke a tongue unknown to him.

An empty grail was placed upside down over his head; his hands were tied behind him with a leather thong. Blind and helpless, stone-tipped spears digging into his back, he was urged across the plain. Somewhere near, drums thundered, and female voices
wailed a chant.

He had walked three hundred paces when he was halted. The drums quit beating, and the women stopped their singsong. He could hear nothing except for the blood beating in his ears. What the hell was going on? Was he part of a religious ceremony which required that the victim be blinded? Why not? There had been many cultures on Earth which did not want the ritually slain to view those who shed his blood. The dead man’s ghost might want to take revenge on his killers.

But these people must know by now that there were no such things as ghosts. Or did they regard *lazari* as just that, as ghosts that could be dispatched back to their land of origin by simply killing them again?

Göring! He, too, had been translated here. At the same grailstone. The first time could have been coincidence, although the probabilities against it were high. But three times in succession? No, it was…

The first blow drove the side of the grail against his head, made him half-unconscious, sent a vast ringing through him and sparks of light before his eyes, and knocked him to his knees. He never felt the second
blow, and so awoke once more in another place—
And with him was Hermann Göring.

"You and I must be twin souls," Göring said.

"We seem to be yoked together by Whoever is responsible for all this."

"The ox and the ass plow together," Burton said, leaving it to the German to decide which he was. Then the two were busy introducing themselves, or attempting to do so, to the people among whom they had arrived. These, as he later found out, were Sumerians of the Old or Classical period; that is, they had lived in Mesopotamia between 2500 and 2300 B.C. The men shaved their heads (no easy custom with flint razors), and the women were bare to the waist. They had a tendency to short squat bodies, pop-eyes, and (to Burton) ugly faces.

But if the index of beauty was not high among them, the pre-Columbian Samoans who made up 30 percent of the population were more than attractive. And, of
course, there was the ubiquitous 10 percent of people from anywhere-everyplace, twentieth-centurians being the most numerous. This was understandable, since the total number of these constituted a fourth of humanity. Burton had no scientific statistical data, of course, but his travels had convinced him that the twentieth-centurians had been deliberately scattered along The River in a proportion to the other peoples even greater than was to be expected. This was another facet of the Riverworld setup which he did not understand. What did the Ethicals intend to gain by this dissemination?

There were too many questions. He needed time to think, and he could not get it if he spent himself with one trip after another on The Suicide Express. This area, unlike most of the others he would visit, offered some peace and quiet for analysis. So he would stay here for a while.

And then there was Hermann Göring. Burton wanted to observe his strange form of pilgrim's progress. One of the many things that he had not been able to ask the Mysterious Stranger (Burton tended to think in capitals) was about the dreamgum. Where did it fit into the picture? Another part of the Great Experiment?
Unfortunately, Göring did not last long.

The first night, he began screaming. He burst out of his hut and ran toward The River, stopping now and then to strike out at the air or to grapple with invisible beings and to roll back and forth on the grass. Burton followed him as far as The River. Here Göring prepared to launch himself out into the water, probably to drown himself. But he froze for a moment, began shuddering, and then toppled over, stiff as a statue. His eyes were open, but they saw nothing outside him. All vision was turned inward. What horrors he was witnessing could not be determined, since he was unable to speak.

His lips writhed soundlessly, and did not stop during the ten days that he lived. Burton’s efforts to feed him were useless. His jaws were locked. He shrank before Burton’s eyes, the flesh evaporating, the skin falling in, and the bones beneath resolving into the skeleton. One morning, he went into convulsions, then sat up and screamed. A moment later he was dead.

Curious, Burton did an autopsy on him with the flint knives and obsidian saws available. Göring’s distended bladder had burst and poured urine into his body.
Burton proceeded to pull Göring’s teeth out before burying him. Teeth were trade items, since they could be strung on a fishgut or a tendon to make much-desired necklaces. Göring’s scalp also came off. The Sumerians had picked up the custom of taking scalps from their enemies, the seventeenth-century Shawnee across The River. They had added the civilized embellishment of sewing scalps together to make capes, skirts, and even curtains. A scalp was not worth as much as teeth in the trade mart, but it was worth something.

It was while digging a grave by a large boulder at the foot of the mountains that Burton had an illuminating flash of memory. He had stopped working to take a drink of water when he happened to look at Göring. The completely stripped head and the features, peaceful as if sleeping, opened a trapdoor in his mind.

When he had awakened in that colossal chamber and found himself floating in a row of bodies, he had seen this face. It had belonged to a body in the row next to his. Göring, like all the other sleepers, had had his head shaved. Burton had only noted him in passing during the short time before the Warders had detected him. Later,
after the mass Resurrection, when he had met Göring, he had not seen the similarity between the sleeper and this man who had a full head of blondish hair.

But he knew now that this man had occupied a space close to his.

Was it possible that their two resurrectors, so physically close to each other, had become locked in phase? If so, whenever his death and Göring’s took place at the same approximate time, then the two would be raised again by the same grailstone. Göring’s jest that they were twin souls might not be so far off the mark.

Burton resumed digging, swearing at the same time because he had so many questions and so few answers. If he had another chance to get his hands on an Ethical, he would drag the answers out of him, no matter what methods he had to use.

The next three months, Burton was busy adjusting himself to the strange society in this area. He found himself fascinated by the new language that was being formed out of the clash between Sumerian and Samoan. Since the former were the most numerous, their tongue
dominated. But here, as elsewhere, the major language suffered a Pyrrhic victory. Result of the fusion was a pidgin, a speech with greatly reduced flexion and simplified syntax. Grammatical gender went overboard; words were syncopated; tense and aspect of verbs were cut to a simple present, which was used also for the future. Adverbs of time indicated the past. Subtleties were replaced by expressions that both Sumerian and Samoan could understand, even if they seemed at first to be awkward and naive. And many Samoan words, in somewhat changed phonology, drove out Sumerian words.

This rise of pidgins was taking place everywhere up and down the Rivervalley. Burton reflected that if the Ethicals had intended to record all human tongues, They had best hurry. The old ones were dying out, transmuting rather. But for all he knew, They had already completed the job. Their recorders, so necessary for accomplishing the physical translation, might also be taking down all speech.

In the meantime, in the evenings, when he had a chance to be alone, he smoked the cigars so generously offered by the grails and tried to analyze the situation.
Whom could he believe, the Ethicals or the Renegade, the Mysterious Stranger? Or were both lying?

Why did the Mysterious Stranger need him to throw a monkey wrench into Their cosmic machinery? What could Burton, a mere human being, trapped in this valley, so limited by his ignorance, do to help the Judas?

One thing was certain. If the Stranger did not need him, he would not have concerned himself with Burton. He wanted to get Burton into that Tower at the north pole.

Why?

It took Burton two weeks before he thought of the only reason that could be.

The stranger had said that he, like the other Ethicals, would not directly take human life. But he had no scruples about doing so vicariously, as witness his giving the poison to Burton. So, if he wanted Burton in the Tower, he needed Burton to kill for him. He would turn the tiger loose among his own people, open the window to the hired assassin.

An assassin wants pay. What did the Stranger offer as pay?
Burton sucked the cigar smoke into his lungs, exhaled and then downed a shot of bourbon. Very well. The Stranger would try to use him. But let him beware. Burton would also use the Stranger.

At the end of three months, Burton decided that he had done enough thinking. It was time to get out.

He was swimming in The River at the moment and, following the impulse, he swam to its middle. He dived down as far as he could force himself before the not-to-be-denied will of his body to survive drove him to claw upward for the dear air. He did not make it. The scavenging fishes would eat his body and his bones would fall to the mud at the bottom of the one thousand-foot-deep River. So much the better. He did not want his body to fall into the hands of the Ethicals. If what the Stranger had said was true, They might be able to unthread from his mind all he had seen and heard if They got to him before the brain cells were damaged.

He did not think They had succeeded. During the next seven years, as far as he knew, he escaped detection of the Ethicals. If the Renegade knew where
he was, he did not let Burton know. Burton doubted that anyone did; he himself could not ascertain in what part of the Riverplanet he was, how far or how near the Tower headquarters. But he was going, going, going, always on the move. And one day he knew that he must have broken a record of some sort. Death had become second nature to him.

If his count was correct, he had made 777 trips on The Suicide Express.
Sometimes Burton thought of himself as a planetary grasshopper, launching himself out into the darkness of death, landing, nibbling a little at the grass, with one eye cocked for the shadow that betrayed the downswoop of the shrike—the Ethicals. In this vast meadow of humanity, he had sampled many blades, tasted briefly, and then had gone on.

Other times he thought of himself as a net scooping up specimens here and there in the huge sea of mankind. He got a few big fish and many sardines, although there was as much, if not more, to be learned from the small fish as from the large ones.

He did not like the metaphor of the net, however, because it reminded him that there was a much larger net out for him.

Whatever metaphors or similes he used, he was a man who got around a lot, to use a twentieth-century Americanism. So much so that he several times came
across the legend of Burton the Gypsy, or, in one English-speaking area, Richard the Rover, and, in another, the Loping Lazarus. This worried him somewhat, since the Ethicals might get a clue to his method of evasion and be able to take measures to trap him. Or They might even guess at his basic goal and set up guards near the headwaters.

At the end of seven years, through much observation of the daystars and through many conversations, he had formed a picture of the course of The River.

It was not an amphisbaena, a snake with two heads, headwaters at the north pole and mouth at the south pole. It was a Midgard Serpent, with the tail at the north pole, the body coiled around and around the planet and the tail in the serpent’s mouth. The River’s source stemmed from the north polar sea, zigzagged back and forth across one hemisphere, circled the south pole and then zigzagged across the face of the other hemisphere, back and forth, ever working upward until the mouth opened into the hypothetical polar sea.

Nor was the large body of water so hypothetical. If the story of the Titanthrop, the subhuman who claimed
to have seen the Misty Tower, was true, the Tower rose out of the fog-shrouded sea.

Burton had heard the tale only at second hand. But he had seen the Titanthrop's near the beginning of The River on his first "jump," and it seemed reasonable that one might actually have crossed the mountains and gotten close enough to get a glimpse of the polar sea. Where one man had gone, another could follow.

And how did The River flow uphill?

Its rate of speed seemed to remain constant even where it should have slowed or refused to go further. From this he postulated localized gravitational fields that urged the mighty stream onward until it had regained an area where natural gravity would take over. Somewhere, perhaps buried under The River itself, were devices that did this work. Their fields must be very restricted, since the pull of the earth did not vary on human beings in these areas to any detectable degree.

There were too many questions. He must go on until he got to the place or to the beings Who could answer them.
And seven years after his first death, he reached the desired area.

It was on his 777th “jump.” He was convinced seven was a lucky number for him. Burton, despite the scoffings of his twentieth-century friends, believed steadfastly in most of the superstitions he had nourished on Earth. He often laughed at the superstitions of others, but he knew that some numbers held good fortune for him, that silver placed on his eyes would rejuvenate his body when it was tired and would help his second sight, the perception that warned him ahead of time of evil situations. True, there seemed to be no silver on this mineral-poor world, but if there were, he could use it to advantage.

All that first day, he stayed at the edge of The River. He paid little attention to those who tried to talk to him, giving them a brief smile. Unlike people in most of the areas he had seen, these were not hostile. The sun moved along the eastern peaks, seemingly just clearing their tops. The flaming ball slid across the valley, lower than he had ever seen it before, except when he had landed among the grotesquely nosed Titanthrops. The sun flooded the valley for a while with light and warmth,
and then began its circling just above the western mountains. The valley became shadowed, and the air became colder than it had been any other place, except, of course, on that first jump. The sun continued to circle until it was again at the point where Burton had first seen it on opening his eyes.

Weary from his twenty-four-hour vigil, but happy, he turned to look for living quarters. He knew now that he was in the arctic area, but he was not at a point just below the headwaters. This time, he was at the other end, the mouth.

As he turned, he heard a voice, familiar but unidentifiable. (He had heard so many.)

“Dull soul aspire;
Thou art not the Earth. Mount higher!
Heaven gave the spark;
to it return the fire.”

“John Collop!”
“Abdul ibn Harun! And they say there are no
miracles! What has happened to you since last I saw you?"

“I died the same night you did,” Burton said. “And several times since. There are many evil men in this world.”

“’Tis only natural. There were many on Earth. Yet I dare say their number has been cut down, for the Church has been able to do much good work, praise God. Especially in this area. But come with me, friend. I’ll introduce you to my hutmate. A lovely woman, faithful in a world that still seems to put little value on marital fidelity or, indeed, in virtue of any sort. She was born in the twentieth century A.D. and taught English most of her life. Verily, I sometimes think she loves me not so much for myself as for what I can teach her of the speech of my time.”

He gave a curious nervous laugh, by which Burton knew he was joking.

They crossed the plains toward the foothills where fires were burning on small stone platforms before each hut. Most of the men and women had fastened towels around them to form parkas which shielded them from
the chill of the shadows.

“A gloomy and shivering place,” Burton said. “Why would anybody want to live here?”

“Most of these people be Finns or Swedes of the late twentieth century. They are used to the midnight sun. However, you should be happy you’re here. I remember your burning curiosity about the polar regions and your speculations anent. There have been others like you who have gone on down The River to seek their ultima Thule, or if you will pardon me for so terming it, the fool’s gold at the end of the rainbow. But all have either failed to return or have come back, daunted by the forbidding obstacles.”

“Which are what?” Burton said, grabbing Collop’s arm.

“Friend, you’re hurting me. Item, the grailstones cease, so that there is nothing wherewith they may recharge their grails with food. Item, the plains of the valley suddenly terminate, and The River pursues its course between the mountains themselves, through a chasm of icy shadows. Item, what lies beyond, I do not know, for no man has come back to tell me. But I fear
they’ve met the end of all who commit the sin of hubris.”

“How far away is this plunge of no return?”

“As The River winds, about 25,000 miles. You may get there with diligent sailing in a year or more. The Almighty Father alone knows how far you must then go before you arrive at the very end of The River. Belike you’d starve before then, because you’d have to take provisions on your boat after leaving the final grailstone.”

“There’s one way to find out,” Burton said.

“Nothing will stop you then, Richard Burton?” Collop said. “You will not give up this fruitless chase after the physical when you should be hot on the track of the metaphysical?”

Burton seized Collop by the arm again. “You said Burton?”

“Yes, I did. Your friend Göring told me some time ago that that was your true name. He also told me other things about you.”

“Göring is here?”
Collop nodded and said, “He has been here for about two years now. He lives a mile from here. We can see him tomorrow. You will be pleased at the change in him, I know. He has conquered the dissolution begun by the dreamgum, shaped the fragments of himself into a new, and a far better, man. In fact, he is now the leader of the Church of the Second Chance in this area.

“While you, my friend, have been questing after some irrelevant grail outside you, he has found the Holy Grail inside himself. He almost perished from madness, nearly fell back into the evil ways of his Terrestrial life. But through the grace of God and his true desire to show himself worthy of being given another opportunity at life, he…well, you may see for yourself tomorrow. And I pray you will profit from his example.”

Collop elaborated. Göring had died almost as many times as Burton, usually by suicide. Unable to stand the nightmares and the self-loathing, he had time and again purchased a brief and useless surcease. Only to be faced with himself the next day. But on arriving at this area, and seeking help from Collop, the man he had once murdered, he had won.
"I am astonished," Burton said. "And I’m happy for Göring. But I have other goals. I would like your promise that you’l l tell no one my true identity. Allow me to be Abdul ibn Harun."

Collop said that he would keep silent, although he was disappointed that Burton would not be able to see Göring again and judge for himself what faith and love could do for even the seemingly hopeless and depraved. He took Burton to his hut and introduced him to his wife, a short, delicately boned brunette. She was very gracious and friendly and insisted on going with the two men while they visited the local boss, the valkotukkainen. (This word was regional slang for white-haired boy or big shot.)

Ville Ahonen was a huge, quiet-spoken man who listened patiently to Burton. Burton revealed only half of his plan, saying that he wanted to build a boat so he could travel to the end of The River. He did not mention wanting to take it further. But Ahonen had evidently met others like him.

He smiled knowingly and replied that Burton could build a craft. However, the people hereabouts were
conservationists. They did not believe in despoiling the land of its trees. Oak and pine were to be left untouched, but bamboo was available. Even this material would have to be purchased with cigarettes and liquor, which would take him some time to accumulate from his grail.

Burton thanked him and left. Later, he went to bed in a hut near Collop’s, but he could not get to sleep.

Shortly before the inevitable rains came, he decided to leave the hut. He would go up into the mountains, take refuge under a ledge until the rains ceased, the clouds dissipated, and the eternal (but weak) sun reasserted itself. Now that he was so near to his goal, he did not want to be surprised by Them. And it seemed likely that the Ethicals would concentrate agents here. For all he knew, Collop’s wife could be one of Them.

Before he had walked half a mile, rain struck him and lightning smashed nearby into the ground. By the dazzling flash, he saw something flicker into existence just ahead and about twenty feet above him.

He whirled and ran toward a grove of trees, hoping
that They had not seen him and that he could hide there. If he was unobserved, then he could get up into the mountains. And when They had put everybody to sleep here, They would find him gone again....
You gave us a long hard chase, Burton,” a man said in English.

Burton opened his eyes. The transition to this place was so unexpected that he was dazed. But only for a second. He was sitting in a chair of some very soft buoyant material. The room was a perfect sphere; the walls were a very pale green and were semitransparent. He could see other spherical chambers on all sides, in front, behind, above and, when he bent over, below. Again he was confused, since the other rooms did not just impinge upon the boundaries of his sphere. They intersected. Sections of the other rooms came into his room, but then became so colorless and clear that he could barely detect them.

On the wall at the opposite end of his room was an oval of darker green. It curved to follow the wall. There was a ghostly forest portrayed in the oval. A phantom fawn trotted across the picture. From it came the odor
of pine and dogwood.

Across the bubble from him sat twelve in chairs like his. Six were men; six, women. All were very good-looking. Except for two, all had black or dark brown hair and deeply tanned skins. Three had slight epicanthic folds; one man's hair was so curly it was almost kinky.

One woman had long wavy yellow hair bound into a psyche knot. A man had red hair, red as the fur of a fox. He was handsome, his features were irregular, his nose large and curved, and his eyes were dark green.

All were dressed in silvery or purple blouses with short flaring sleeves and ruffled collars, slender luminescent belts, kilts, and sandals. Both men and women had painted fingernails and toenails, earrings, and eye makeup.

Above the head of each, almost touching the hair, spun a many-colored globe about a foot across. These whirled and flashed and changed color, running through every hue in the spectrum. From time to time, the globes thrust out long hexagonal arms of green, of blue, of black, or of gleaming white. Then the arms would
collapse, only to be succeeded by other hexagons.

Burton looked down. He was clad only in a black towel secured at his waist.

“I’ll forestall your first question by telling you we won’t give you any information on where you are.”

The speaker was the red-haired man. He grinned at Burton, showing unhumanly white teeth.

“Very well,” Burton said. “What questions will you answer, Whoever you are? For instance, how did you find me?”

“My name is Loga,” the red-haired man said. “We found you through a combination of detective work and luck. It was a complicated procedure, but I’ll simplify it for you. We had a number of agents looking for you, a pitifully small number, considering the thirty-six billion, six million, nine thousand, six hundred and thirty-seven candidates that live along The River.”

Candidates? Burton thought. Candidates for what? For eternal life? Had Spruce told the truth about the purpose behind the Resurrection?

Loga said, “We had no idea that you were escaping
us by suicide. Even when you were detected in areas so widely separated that you could not possibly have gotten to them except through resurrection, we did not suspect. We thought that you had been killed and then translated. The years went by. We had no idea where you were. There were other things for us to do, so we pulled all agents from the Burton Case, as we called it, except for some stationed at both ends of The River. Somehow, you had knowledge of the polar tower. Later we found out how. Your friends Göring and Collop were very helpful, although they did not know they were talking to Ethicals, of course.”

“Who notified you that I was near The River’s end?” Burton said.

Loga smiled and said, “There’s no need for you to know. However, we would have caught you anyway. You see, every space in the restoration bubble—the place where you unaccountably awakened during the prereresurrection phase—has an automatic counter. They were installed for statistical and research purposes. We like to keep records of what’s going on. For instance, any candidate who has a higher than average number of deaths sooner or later is a subject for study. Usually
later, since we’re short-handed.

“It was not until your 777th death that we got around to looking at some of the higher frequency resurrections. Yours had the highest count. You may be congratulated on this, I suppose.”

“There are others, as well?”

“They’re not being pursued, if that’s what you mean. And, relatively speaking, they’re not many. We had no idea that it was you who had racked up this staggering number. Your space in the PR bubble was empty when we looked at it during our statistical investigation. The two technicians who had seen you when you woke up in the PR chamber identified you by your…photograph.

“We set the resurrector so that the next time your body was to be re-created, an alarm would notify us, and we would bring you here to this place.”

“Suppose I hadn’t died again?” Burton said.

“You were destined to die! You planned on trying to enter the polar sea via The River’s mouth, right? That is impossible. The last hundred miles of The River go through an underground tunnel. Any boat would be torn to pieces. Like others who have dared the journey, you
would have died.”

Burton said, “My photograph—the one I took from Agneau. That was obviously taken on Earth when I was an officer for John Company in India. How was that gotten?”

“Research, Mr. Burton,” Loga said, still smiling.

Burton wanted to smash the look of superiority on his face. He did not seem to be restrained by anything; he could, seemingly, walk over to Loga and strike him. But he knew that the Ethicals were not likely to sit in the same room with him without safeguards. They would as soon have given a rabid hyena its freedom.

“Did you ever find out what made me awaken before my time?” he asked. “Or what made those others gain consciousness, too?”

Loga gave a start. Several of the men and women gasped.

Loga rallied first. He said, “We’ve made a thorough examination of your body. You have no idea how thorough. We have also screened every component of your…psychomorph, I think you could call it. Or aura, whichever word you prefer.” He gestured at the sphere
above his head. “We found no clues whatsoever.”

Burton threw back his head and laughed loudly and long.

“So you bastards don’t know everything!”

Loga smiled tightly. “No. We never will. Only One is omnipotent.”

He touched his forehead, lips, heart, and genitals with the three longest fingers of his right hand. The others did the same.

“However, I’ll tell you that you frightened us—if that’ll make you feel any better. You still do. You see, we are fairly sure that you may be one of the men of whom we were warned.”

“Warned against? By whom?”

“By a…sort of giant computer, a living one. And by its operator.” Again, he made the curious sign with his fingers. “That’s all I care to tell you—even though you won’t remember a thing that occurs down here after we send you back to the Rivervalley.”

Burton’s mind was clouded with anger, but not so much that he missed the “down here.” Did that mean
that the resurrection machinery and the hideout of the Ethicals were below the surface of the Riverworld?

Loga continued, “The data indicates you may have the potentiality to wreck our plans. Why you should or how you might, we do not know. But we respect our source of information, how highly you can’t imagine.”

“If you believe that,” Burton said, “why don’t you just put me in cold storage? Suspend me between those two bars. Leave me floating in space, turning around and around forever, like a roast on a spit, until your plans are completed?”

Loga said, “We couldn’t do that! That act alone would ruin everything! How would you attain your salvation? Besides, that would mean an unforgivable violence on our part! It’s unthinkable!”

“You were being violent when you forced me to run and hide from you,” Burton said. “You are being violent now by holding me here against my will. And you will violate me when you destroy my memory of this little tête-à-tête with you.”

Loga almost wrung his hands. If he was the Mysterious Stranger, the renegade Ethical, he was a
great actor. In a grieved tone, Loga said, “That is only partly true. We had to take certain measures to protect ourselves. If the man had been anyone but you, we would have left you strictly alone. It is true we violated our own code of ethics by making you run from us and by examining you. That had to be, however. And, believe me, we are paying for this in mental agony.”

“You could make up for some of it by telling me why I, why all the human beings that ever lived, have been resurrected. And how you did it.”

Loga talked, with occasional interruptions from some of the others. The yellow-haired woman broke in most often, and after a while Burton deduced from her attitude and Loga’s that she was either his wife or she held a high position.

Another man interrupted at times. When he did, there was a concentration and respect from the others that led Burton to believe he was the head of this group. Once he turned his head so that the light sparkled off one eye. Burton stared, because he had not noticed before that the left eye was a jewel.

Burton thought that it probably was a device which
gave him a sense, or senses, of perception denied the others. From then on, Burton felt uncomfortable whenever the faceted and gleaming eye was turned on him. What did that many-angled prism see?

At the end of the explanation, Burton did not know much more than he had before. The Ethicals could see back into the past with a sort of chronoscope; with this they had been able to record whatever physical beings they wished to. Using these records as models, they had then performed the resurrection with energy-matter converters.

“What,” Burton said, “would happen if you re-created two bodies of an individual at the same time?”

Loga smiled wryly and said that the experiment had been performed. Only one body had life.

Burton smiled like a cat that has just eaten a mouse. He said, “I think you’re lying to me. Or telling me half-truths. There is a fallacy in all this. If human beings can attain such a rarefiedly high ethical state that they ‘go on,’ why are you Ethicals, supposedly superior beings, still here? Why haven’t you, too, ‘gone on’?”

The faces of all but Loga and the jewel-eyed man
became rigid. Loga laughed and said, "Very shrewd. An excellent point. I can only answer that some of us do go on. But more is demanded of us, ethically speaking, than of you resurrectees."

"I still think you're lying," Burton said. "However, there's nothing I can do about it." He grinned and said, "Not just now, anyway."

"If you persist in that attitude, you will never Go On," Loga said. "But we felt that we owed it to you to explain what we are doing—as best we could. When we catch those others who have been tampered with, we'll do the same for them."

"There's a Judas among you," Burton said, enjoying the effect of his words.

But the jewel-eyed man said, "Why don't you tell him the truth, Loga? It'll wipe off that sickening smirk and put him in his proper place."

Loga hesitated, then said, "Very well, Thanabur. Burton, you will have to be very careful from now on. You must not commit suicide and you must fight as hard to stay alive as you did on Earth, when you thought you had only one life. There is a limit to the
number of times a man may be resurrected. After a certain amount—it varies and there's no way to predict the individual allotment—the psychomorph seems unable to reattach itself to the body. Every death weakens the *attraction* between body and psychomorph. Eventually, the psychomorph comes to the point of no return. It becomes a—well, to use an unscientific term—a ‘lost soul.’ It wanders bodiless through the universe; we can detect these unattached psychomorphs with instruments, unlike those of the—how shall I put it?—the ‘saved,’ which disappear entirely from our ken.

“So you see, you must give up this form of travel by death. This is why continued suicide by those poor unfortunates who cannot face life is, if not the unforgivable sin, the irrevocable.”

The jewel-eyed man said, “The traitor, the filthy unknown who claims to be aiding you, was actually using you for his own purposes. He did not tell you that you were expending your chance for eternal life by carrying out his—and your—designs. He, or she, whoever the traitor is, is evil. Evil, evil!
“Therefore, you must be careful from now on. You may have a residue of a dozen or so deaths left to you. Or your next death may be your last!”

Burton stood up and shouted, “You don’t want me to get to the end of The River? Why? Why?”

Loga said, “Au revoir. Forgive us for this violence.”

Burton did not see any of the twelve persons point an instrument at him. But consciousness sprang from him as swiftly as an arrow from the bow, and he awoke....
The first person to greet him was Peter Frigate. Frigate lost his customary reserve; he wept. Burton cried a little himself and had difficulty for a while in answering Frigate’s piled-one-on-the-other questions. First, Burton had to find out what Frigate, Loghu, and Alice had done after he had disappeared. Frigate replied that the three had looked for him, then had sailed back up The River to Theleme.

"Where have you been?" Frigate said.

"From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it," Burton said. "However, unlike Satan, I found at least several perfect and upright men, fearing God and eschewing evil. Damn few, though. Most men and women are still the selfish, ignorant, superstitious, self-blinding, hypocritical, cowardly wretches they were on Earth. And in most, the old red-eyed killer ape struggles with its keeper, society, and would break out and bloody its hands."
Frigate chattered away as the two walked toward the huge stockade a mile away, the council building which housed the administration of the state of Theleme. Burton half listened. He was shaking and his heart was beating hard, but not because of his homecoming.

He remembered!

Contrary to what Loga had promised, he remembered both his wakening in the preresurrection bubble, so many years ago, and the inquisition with the twelve Ethicals.

There was only one explanation. One of the twelve must have prevented the blocking of his memory and done so without the others knowing it.

One of the twelve was the Mysterious Stranger, the Renegade.

Which one? At present, there was no way of determining. But someday he would find out. Meanwhile, he had a friend in court, a man who might be using Burton for his own ends. And the time would come when Burton would use him.

There were the other human beings with whom the Stranger had also tampered. Perhaps he would find
them; together they would assault the Tower.

Odysseus had his Athena. Usually Odysseus had had to get out of perilous situations through his own wits and courage. But every now and then, when the goddess had been able, she had given Odysseus a helping hand.

Odysseus had his Athena; Burton, his Mysterious Stranger.

Frigate said, “What do you plan on doing, Dick?”

“I’m going to build a boat and sail up The River. All the way! Want to come along?”
The Fabulous Riverboat
For the unholy trinity of Bobs:
Bloch, Heinlein, and Traurig—
may I meet them on
the banks of The River,
where we’ll board the
fabulous Riverboat
resurrection, like politics, makes strange bedfellows,” Sam Clemens said. “I can’t say that the sleeping is very restful.”

Telescope under one arm, he puffed on a long, green cigar while he paced back and forth on the poop deck of the Dreyrugr (Bloodstained). Ari Grimolfsson, the helmsman, not understanding English, looked bleakly at Clemens. Clemens translated for him in wretched Old Norse. The helmsman still looked bleak.

Clemens loudly cursed him in English for a dunderheaded barbarian. For three years, Clemens had been practicing tenth-century Norse night and day. And he was still only half intelligible to most of the men and women aboard the Dreyrugr.

“A ninety-five-year-old Huck Finn, give or take a few thousand years,” Clemens said. “I start out down The River on a raft. Now I’m on this idiot Viking ship, going up River. What next? When will I realize my
dream?”

Keeping the upper part of his right arm close to his body so he would not drop the precious telescope, he pounded his right fist into his open left palm.

“Iron! I need iron! But where on this people-rich, metal-poor planet is iron? There has to be some! Otherwise, where did Erik’s ax come from? And how much is there? Enough? Probably not. Probably there’s just a very small meteorite. But maybe there’s enough for what I want. But where? My God, The River may be twenty million miles long! The iron, if any, may be at the other end.

“No, that can’t be! It has to be somewhere not too far away, within one hundred thousand miles of here. But we may be going in the wrong direction. Ignorance, the mother of hysteria, or is it vice versa?”

He looked through the telescope at the right bank and cursed again. Despite his pleas to bring the ship in so that he could scan the faces at a closer range, he had been refused. The king of the Norseman fleet, Erik Bloodaxe, said that this was hostile territory. Until the fleet was out of it, the fleet would stay close to the
middle of The River.

The *Dreyrugr* was the flagship of three, all alike. It was eighty feet long, built largely of bamboo, and resembled a Viking dragon boat. It had a long, low hull, an oak figurehead carved into a dragon’s head, and a curled-tail stern. But it also had a raised foredeck and poop deck, the sides of both extending out over the water. The two bamboo masts were fore-and-aft rigged. The sails were a very thin but tough and flexible membrane made from the stomach of the deep-dwelling Riverdragon fish. There was also a rudder controlled by a wheel on the poop deck.

The round leather-and-oak shields of the crew hung over the sides; the great oars were piled on racks. The *Dreyrugr* was sailing against the wind, tacking back and forth, a maneuver unknown to the Norsemen when they had lived on Earth.

The men and women of the crew not handling the ropes sat on the oarsmen benches and talked and threw dice and played poker. From below the poop deck came cries of exultation or curses and an occasional faint click. Bloodaxe and his bodyguard were shooting
pool, and their doing so at this time made Clemens very nervous. Bloodaxe knew that enemy ships three miles up The River were putting out to intercept them, and ships from both banks behind them were putting out to trail them. Yet the king was pretending to be very cool. Maybe he was actually as undisturbed as Drake had supposedly been just before the battle of the Great Armada.

“But the conditions are different here,” Clemens muttered. “There’s not much room to maneuver on a river only a mile and a half wide. And no storm is going to help us out.”

He swept the bank with the telescope as he had been doing ever since the fleet set out three years ago. He was of medium height and had a big head that made his none-too-broad shoulders look even more narrow. His eyes were blue; his eyebrows, shaggy; his nose, Roman. His hair was long and reddish brown. His face was innocent of the mustache that had been so well known during his terrestrial life. (Men had been resurrected without face hair.) His chest was a sea of brown-red curly hair that lapped at the hollow of his throat. He wore only a knee-length white towel secured
at the waist, a leather belt for holding weapons and the sheath for his telescope, and leather slippers. His skin was bronzed by the equatorial sun.

He removed the telescope from his eye to look at the enemy ships trailing by a mile. As he did so, he saw something flash in the sky. It was a curving sword of white, appearing suddenly as if unsheathed from the blue. It stabbed downward and then was gone behind the mountains.

Sam was startled. He had seen many small meteorites in the night sky but never a large one. Yet this daytime giant set his eyes afire and left an afterimage on his eyes for a second or two. Then the image faded, and Sam forgot about the falling star. He scanned the bank again with his telescope.

This part of The River had been typical. On each side of the mile-and-a-half-wide River was a mile-and-a-half-wide grass-grown plain. On each bank, huge mushroom-shaped stone structures, the grailstones, were spaced a mile apart. Trees were few on the plains, but the foothills were thick with pine, oak, yew, and the
irontree. This was a thousand-foot-high plant with gray bark, enormous elephant-ear leaves, hundreds of thick gnarly branches, roots so deep and wood so hard that the tree could not be cut, burned, or dug out. Vines bearing large flowers of many bright colors grew over their branches.

There was a mile or two of foothills, and then the abruptness of smooth-sided mountains, towering from twenty thousand to thirty thousand feet, unscalable past the ten thousand-foot mark.

The area through which the three Norse boats were sailing was inhabited largely by early nineteenth-century Germans. There was the usual ten percent population from another place and time of Earth. Here, the ten percent was first-century Persians. And there was also the ubiquitous one percent of seemingly random choices from any time and any place.

The telescope swung past the bamboo huts on the plains and the faces of the people. The men were clad only in various towels; the women, in short towellike skirts and thin cloths around the breasts. There were many gathered on the bank, apparently to watch the
battle. They carried flint-tipped spears and bows and arrows but were not in martial array.

Clemens grunted suddenly and held the telescope on the face of a man. At this distance and with the weak power of the instrument, he could not clearly see the man’s features. But the wide-shouldered body and dark face suggested familiarity. Where had he seen that face before?

Then it struck him. The man looked remarkably like the photographs of the famous English explorer Sir Richard Burton that he’d seen on Earth. Rather, there was something suggestive of the man. Clemens sighed and turned the eyepiece to the other faces as the ship took him away. He would never know the true identity of the fellow.

He would have liked to put ashore and talk to him, find out if he really was Burton. In the twenty years of life on this river-planet, and the seeing of millions of faces, Clemens had not yet met one person he had known on Earth. He did not know Burton personally, but he was sure that Burton must have heard of him. This man—if he was Burton—would be a link, if thin, to
the dead Earth.

And then, as a far-off blurred figure came within the round of the telescope, Clemens cried out incredulously.

“Livy! Oh, my God! Livy!”

There could be no doubt. Although the features could not be clearly distinguished, they formed an overwhelming, not-to-be-denied truth. The head, the hairdo, the figure, and the unmistakable walk (as unique as a fingerprint) shouted out that here was his Earthly wife.

“Livy!” he sobbed. The ship heeled to tack, and he lost her. Frantically, he swung the end of the scope back and forth.

Eyes wide, he stomped with his foot on the deck, and he bellowed, “Bloodaxe! Bloodaxe! Up here! Hurry!”

He swung toward the helmsman and shouted that he should go back and direct the ship toward the bank. Grimolfsson was taken aback at first by Clemens’ vehemence. Then he slitted his eyes, shook his head, and growled out a no.
“I order you to!” Clemens screamed, forgetting that the helmsman did not understand English. “That’s my wife! Livy! My beautiful Livy, as she was when she was twenty-five! Brought back from the dead!”

Someone rumbled behind him, and Clemens whirled to see a blond head with a shorn-off left ear appear on the level of the deck. Then Erik Bloodaxe’s broad shoulders, massive chest, and huge biceps came into view, followed by pillarlike thighs as he came up on the ladder. He wore a green-and-black checked towel, a broad belt holding several chert knives and a holster for his ax. This was of steel, broadbladed and with an oak handle. It was, as far as Clemens knew, unique on this planet, where stone and wood were the only materials for weapons.

He frowned as he looked over The River. He turned to Clemens and said, “What is it, sma-skitligr? You made me miscue when you screamed like Thor’s bride on her wedding night. I lost a cigar to Toki Njalsson.”

He took the ax from its holster and swung it. The sun glinted off the blue steel. “You had better have a good reason for disturbing me. I have killed many men for far
Clemens’ face was pale beneath the tan, but this time it was not caused by Erik’s threat. He glared, the wind-ruffled hair, staring eyes, and aquiline profile making him look like a kestrel falcon.

“To hell with you and your ax!” he shouted. “I just saw my wife, Livy, there on the right bank! I want...I demand...that you take me ashore so I can be with her again! Oh, God, after all these years, all this hopeless searching! It’ll only take a minute! You can’t deny me this; you’d be inhuman to do so!”

The ax whistled and sparkled. The Norseman grinned.

“All this fuss for a woman? What about her?” And he gestured at a small dark woman standing near the great pedestal and tube of the rocket-launcher.

Clemens became even paler. He said, “Temah is a fine girl! I’m very fond of her! But she’s not Livy!”

“Enough of this,” Bloodaxe said. “Do you take me to be as big a fool as you? If I put into shore, we’d be
caught between the ground and river forces, ground like meal in Frey's mill. Forget about her.”

Clemens screamed like a falcon and launched himself, arms out and flapping, at the Viking. Erik brought the flat of the ax against Clemens’ head and knocked him to the deck. For several minutes, Clemens lay on his back, eyes open and staring at the sun. Blood seeped from the roots of the hair falling down over his face. Then he got to all fours and began to vomit.

Erik gave an impatient order. Temah, looking sidewise with fright at Erik, dipped a bucket at the end of a rope into The River. She threw the water over Clemens, who sat up and then wobbled to his feet. Temah drew another bucket and washed off the deck.

Clemens snarled at Erik. Erik laughed and said, “Little coward, you’ve been talking too big for too long! Now, you know what happens when you talk to Erik Bloodaxe as if he were a thrall. Consider yourself lucky that I did not kill you.”

Clemens spun away from Erik, staggered to the railing, and began to climb upon it. “Livy!”

Swearing, Bloodaxe ran after him, seized him around
the waist, and dragged him back. Then he pushed Clemens so heavily that Clemens fell on the deck again.

“You’re not deserting me at this time!” Erik said. “I need you to find that iron mine!”

“There isn….” Clemens said and then closed his mouth tightly. Let the Norseman find out that he did not know where the mine—if there was a mine—was located, and he would be killed on the spot.

“Moreover,” Erik continued cheerfully, “after we find the iron, I may need you to help us toward the Polar Tower, although I think I can get there just by following The River. But you have much knowledge that I need. And I can use that frost giant, Joe Miller.”

“Joe!” Clemens said in a thick voice. He tried to get back onto his feet. “Joe Miller! Where’s Joe? He’ll kill you!”

The ax cut the air above Clemens’ head. “You will tell Joe nothing of this, do you hear? I swear by Odin’s blind socket, I will get to you and kill you before he can put a hand on me. Do you hear?”

Clemens got to his feet and swayed for a minute. Then he called, in a louder voice, “Joe! Joe Miller!”
A voice from below the poop deck muttered. It was so deep that it made the hairs on the backs of men’s necks rise even after hearing it for the thousandth time.

The stout bamboo ladder creaked beneath a weight, creaked so loudly it could be heard above the song of wind through leather ropes, flapping of membranous sails, grind of wooden joints, shouts of crew, hiss of water against the hull.

The head that rose above the edge of the deck was even more frightening than the inhumanly deep voice. It was as large as a half pony of beer and was all bars and arches and shelves and flying buttresses of bone beneath a pinkish and loose skin. Bone circled the eyes, small-seeming and dark blue. The nose was inappropriate to the rest of his features, since it should have been flat-bridged and flaring-nostriled. Instead, it was the monstrous and comical travesty of the human
nose that the proboscis monkey shows to a laughing world. In its lengthy shadow was a long upper lip, like a chimpanzee’s or comic-strip Irishman’s. The lips were thin and protruded, shoved out by the convex jaws beneath.

His shoulders made Erik Bloodaxe’s look like pretzels. Ahead of him he pushed a great paunch, a balloon trying to rise from the body to which it was anchored. His legs and arms seemed short, they were so out of proportion to the long trunk. The juncture of thigh and body was level with Sam Clemens’ chin, and his arms, extended, could hold, and had held, Clemens out at arm’s length in the air for an hour without a tremor.

He wore no clothes nor did he need them for modesty’s sake, though he had not known modesty until taught by Homo sapiens. Long rusty-red hair, thicker than a man’s, less dense than a chimpanzee’s, was plastered to the body by his sweat. The skin beneath the hairs was the dirty-pink of a blond Nordic.

He ran a hand the size of an unabridged dictionary through the wavy, rusty-red hair that began an inch
above the eyes and slanted back rapidly. He yawned and showed huge human-seeming teeth.

“I vath thleeping,” he rumbled, “I vath dreaming of Earth, of klravulthithmengbhabafving—what you call mammothth. Thothe vere the good old dayth.”

He shuffled forward, then stopped. “Tham! Vhat happened! You’re bleeding! You look thick!”

Bellowing for his guards, Erik Bloodaxe stepped backward from the titanthrop. “Your friend went mad! He thought he’d seen his wife—for the thousandth time—and he attacked me because I wouldn’t take him in to the bank to her. Tyr’s testicles, Joe! You know how many times he’s thought he saw that woman, and how many times we stopped, and how many times it always turned out to be a woman who looked something like his woman but wasn’t!

“This time, I said no! Even if it had been his woman, I would have said no! We’d be putting our heads in the wolf’s mouth!”

Erik crouched, ax lifted, ready to swing at the giant. Shouts came from middeck, and a big redhead with a flint ax ran up the ladder. The helmsman gestured for
him to leave. The redhead, seeing Joe Miller so belligerent, did not hesitate to retreat.

“Vhat you thay, Tham?” Miller said. “Thyould I tear him apart?”

Clemens held his head in both hands and said, “No. He’s right, I suppose. I don’t really know if she was Livy. Probably just a German hausfrau. I don’t know!”

He groaned. “I don’t know! Maybe it was her!”

Fishbone horns blared, and a huge drum on the middeck thundered. Sam Clemens said, “Forget about this, Joe, until we get through the straits—if we do get through! If we’re to survive, we’ll have to fight together. Later….”

“You alvayth thay later, Tham, but there never ith a later. Vhy?”

“If you can’t figure that out, Joe, you’re as dumb as you look!” Clemens snapped.

Tearshields glinted in Joe’s eyes, and his bulging cheeks became wet.

“Every time you get thcared, you call me dumb,” he said. “Vhy take it out on me? Vhy not on the people
"I apologize, Joe," Clemens said. "Out of the mouths of babes and apemen... You're not so dumb; you're pretty smart. Forget it, Joe, I'm sorry."

Bloodaxe swaggered up to them but kept out of Joe's reach. He grinned as he swung his ax. "There shall soon be a *meeting of the metal!*" And then he laughed and said, "What am I saying? Battle anymore is the meeting of stone and wood, except for my star-ax, of course! But what does that matter? I have grown tired of these six months of peace. I need the cries of war, the whistling spear, the chunk of my sharp steel biting into flesh, the spurt of blood. I have become as impatient as a penned-up stallion who smells a mare in heat; I would mate with Death."

"Bull!" Joe Miller said. "You're just as bad as Tham in your way. You're thcared, too, but you cover it up with your big mouth."

"I do not understand your mangled speech," Bloodaxe said. "Apes should not attempt the tongue of man."

"You understand me all right," Joe said.
“Keep quiet, Joe,” Clemens said. He looked up river. Two miles away, the plains on each side of The River dwindled away as the mountains curved inward to create straits not more than a quarter mile wide. The water boiled at the bottom of the cliffs, which were perhaps three thousand feet high. On the cliff-tops, on both sides, unidentified objects glittered in the sun.

A half mile below the straits, thirty galleys had formed three crescents. And, aided by the swift current and sixty oars each, they were speeding toward the three intruders. Clemens viewed them through his telescope and then said, “Each has about forty warriors aboard and two rocket-launchers. We’re in a hell of a trap. And our own rockets have been in storage so long, the powder’s likely to be crystalized. They’ll go off in the tubes and blow us to kingdom come.

“And those things on top of the cliffs. Apparatus for projecting Greek fire?”

A man brought the king’s armor: a triple-layered leather helmet with imitation leather wings and a nosepiece, a leather cuirass, leather breeches, and a
shield. Another man brought a bundle of spears: yew shafts and flint tips.

The rocket crew, all women, placed a projectile in the swivel-able launching tube. The rocket was six feet long, not counting the guide stick, built of bamboo, and looked exactly like a Fourth of July rocket. Its warhead contained twenty pounds of black gunpowder in which were many tiny chips of stone: shrapnel.

Joe Miller, the deck creaking beneath his eight hundred pounds, went below to get his armor and weapons. Clemens put on a helmet and slung a shield over his shoulder, but he would not use a cuirass or leggings. Although he feared wounds, he was even more frightened of drowning because of the heavy armor if he fell into The River.

Clemens thanked whatever gods there were that he had been lucky enough to fall in with Joe Miller. They were blood brothers now—even if Clemens had fainted during the ceremony, which demanded mingling of blood and some even more painful and repulsive acts. Miller was to defend him, and Clemens was to defend Miller to the death. So far, the titanthrop had done all
the battling. But then he was more than big enough for two.

Bloodaxe’s dislike of Miller was caused by envy. Bloodaxe fancied himself as the world’s greatest fighter and yet knew that Miller would have no more trouble dispatching him in combat than Miller would with a dog.

And with a small dog at that.

Erik Bloodaxe gave his battle orders, which were transmitted to the other two ships by flashes of sunlight off obsidian mirrors. The ships would keep sails up and try to steer between the galleys. This would be difficult because a ship might have to change course to avoid ramming and so lose the wind. Also, each ship would thrice be subjected to crossfire.

“The wind’s with them,” Clemens said. “Their rockets will have more range until we’re among them.”

“Teach your grandmother to suck....” Bloodaxe said and stopped.

Some bright objects on the cliff tops had left their positions and now were swooping through the air in a path that would bring them close above the Vikings. The Norsemen shouted with bewilderment and alarm,
but Clemens recognized them as gliders. In as few words as possible, he explained to Bloodaxe. The king started to relay the information to the other Vikings but had to stop because the lead galleys fired off the first volley of rockets. Wobbling, trailing thick black smoke, ten rockets arced toward the three sailships. These changed course as quickly as possible, two almost colliding. Some of the rockets almost struck the masts or the hulls, but all splashed, unexploded, in The River.

By then the first of the gliders made its pass. Slim-fuselaged, long-winged, with black Maltese crosses on the sides of its slim and silvery fuselage, it dived at a 45-degree angle toward the Dreyrugr. The Norse archers bent their yew bows and, at a command from the chief archer, loosed their shafts.

The glider swooped low over the water, several arrows sticking out of the fuselage, and it settled down for a landing on The River. It had failed to drop its bombs on the Dreyrugr. They were somewhere below the surface of The River.

But now other gliders were coming in at all three ships, and the enemy lead galleys had loosed another
flight of rockets. Clemens glanced at their own rocket-launcher. The big blonde crew-women were swiveling the tube under the command of small dark Temah, but she was not ready to touch the fuse. The *Dreyrugr* was not yet within range of the nearest galley.

For a second, everything was as if suspended in a photograph: the two gliders, their wingtips only two feet apart, pulling up out of the dive and the small black bombs dropping toward the decks of their targets, the arrows halfway toward the gliders, the German rockets halfway toward the Viking ships, on the downcurve of their arcs.

Clemens felt the sudden push of wind behind him, a whistling, an explosion as the sails took the full impact of air and rolled the ship over sharply on its longitudinal axis. There was a tearing sound as if the fabric of the world were being ripped apart; a crackling as if great axes had slammed into the masts.

The bombs, the gliders, the rockets, the arrows were lifted upward and backward, turned upside down. The sails and masts left the ship, as if they had been launched from tubes, and soared away. The ship,
released from the push of sail, rolled back to horizontal from an almost 90-degree angle to The River. Clemens was saved from flying off the deck to the first slam of wind only because the titanthrop had seized the wheel with one hand and clutched him with the other. The helmsman had also clung to the wheel. The rocket crew, their shrieks carried upRiver by the wind, mouths open, hair whipping, flew like birds from the ship, soared, and then splashed into The River. The rocket tube tore loose from its pedestal and followed them.

Bloodaxe had grabbed the railing with one hand and kept hold of his precious steel weapon with the other. While the ship rocked back and forth, he managed to stick the ax handle in the holster and then to cling to the railing with both hands. It was well for him that he did, because the wind, screaming like a woman falling off a cliff, became even more powerful and within a few seconds, a hot blast tore at the ship, and Clemens was as deafened and as seared as if he were standing near a rocket blast.

A great swell of Riverwater lifted the ship high. Clemens opened his eyes and then screamed but could not hear his own voice because of his stunned ears.
A wall of dirty brown water, at least fifty feet high, was racing around the curve of the valley between four and five miles away. He wanted to close his eyes again but could not. He continued to gaze with his lids rigid until the elevated sea was a mile away. Then he could make out the individual trees, the giant pines, oaks, and yews scattered along the front of the wave, and, as it got closer, pieces of bamboo and pine houses, a roof somehow still intact, a shattered hull with a half mast, the sperm-whale-sized, dark-gray body of a Riverdragon fish, plucked from the five-hundred-foot depths of The River.

Terror numbed him. He wanted to die to escape this particular death. But he could not, and so he watched with frozen eyes and congealed mind as the ship, instead of being drowned and smashed beneath hundreds of thousands of gallons of water, rose up and up and up on the slope of the wave, up and up, the dirty brown wreckage-strewn cliff towering above, always threatening to avalanche down upon the ship, and the sky above, now turned from bright noon-blue to gray.

Then they were on the top, poised for a downward slide, rocked, dipped, and went down toward the
trough. Smaller, but still huge waves fell over the boat. A body landed on the deck near Clemens, a body catapulted from the raging waters. Clemens stared at it with only a spark of comprehension. He was too iced with terror to feel anymore; he had reached the limits.

And so he stared at Livy’s body, smashed on one side but untouched on the other side. It was Livy, his wife, whom he had seen on that Riverbank.

Another wave that almost tore him and the titanthrop loose struck the deck. The helmsman screamed as he lost his grip and followed the woman’s corpse overboard.

The boat, sliding upward from the depths of the trough, turned to present its broadside to the wave. But the boat continued to soar upward, though it tilted so that Miller and Clemens were hanging from the stump of the wheel’s base as if they were dangling from a tree trunk on the face of a mountain. Then the boat rolled back to horizontal position as it raced down the next valley. Bloodaxe had lost his grip and was shot across the deck and would have gone over the other side if the ship had not righted itself in time. Now he clung to the
port railing.

On top of the third wave, the *Dreyrugr* sped slantwise down the mountain of water. It struck the broken forepart of another vessel, shuddered, and Bloodaxe’s grip was torn loose by the impact. He spun along the railing, hit the other railing on the edge of the poop deck, shattered it, and went on over the edge and below to the middeck.
Not until morning of the next day did Sam Clemens thaw out of his shock. The Dreyrugr had somehow ridden out the great waves long enough to go slanting across the plains on the shallower but still rough waters. It had been shot past hills and through a narrow pass into a small canyon at the base of the mountain. And, as the waters subsided from beneath it, the boat had settled with a crash into the ground.

The crew lay in terror thick as cold mud while The River and the wind raged and the sky remained the color of chilling iron. Then the winds ceased. Rather, the downRiver winds stopped, and the normal soothing wind from upRiver resumed.

The five survivors on deck began to stir and to ask questions. Sam felt as if he could barely force the words out through a numbed mouth. Stammering, he told them of the flash he had seen in the sky fifteen minutes before the winds struck. Somewhere down the valley, maybe
two hundred miles away, a giant meteorite had struck. The winds created by the heat of passage through the air and by the displacement of air by the meteorite had generated those giant waves. Terrible as they were, they must have been pygmies compared to those nearer the point of impact. Actually, the Dreyrugr was in the outer edge of the fury.

"It had quit being mad and was getting downright jovial when we met it," Sam said.

Some of the Norse got unsteadily to their feet and tottered across the deck. Some stuck their heads out of the hatches. Bloodaxe was hurting from his roll across the deck, but he managed to roar, "Everybody below decks! There will be many more great waves much worse than this one, there’s no telling how many!"

Sam did not like Bloodaxe, to put it mildly, yet he had to admit that the Norwegian was bright enough when it came to the ways of water. He himself had supposed that the first waves would be the last.

The crew lay down in the hold wherever they could find space and something stable to hang on to, and they waited, but not for long. The earth rumbled and shook,
and then The River struck the pass with a hiss like a fifty-foot-high cat, followed by a bellow. Borne upward by the flood pouring through the pass, the *Dreyrugr* rocked and spun around and around as it rocked. Sam turned cold. He was sure that if there had been daylight, he and the others would look as gray-blue as corpses.

Up the boat went, occasionally scraping against the walls of the canyon. Just as Sam was about to swear that the *Dreyrugr* had reached the top of the canyon and was going to be carried over its front in a cataract, the boat dropped. It sank swiftly, or so it seemed, while the waters poured out through the pass almost as quickly as they had entered. There was a crash, followed by the heavy breathing of men and women, a groan here and there, the dripping of water, and the far away roar of the receding river.

It was not over yet. There was more waiting in cold numb terror until the great mass of water would rush back to fill the spaces from which it had been displaced by the blazing many hundreds of thousands of tons mass of the meteorite. They shivered as if encased in ice,
although the air was far warmer than it had ever been at this time of night. And, for the first time in the twenty years on this planet, it did not rain at night.

Before the waters struck again, they felt the shake and grumble of earth. There was a vast hiss and a roar, and again the boat rose up, spun, bumped against the walls of the canyon, and then sank. This time, the ship did not strike the ground so hard, probably, Sam thought, because the boat had hit a thick layer of mud.

"I don’t believe in miracles," Sam whispered, "but this is one. We’ve no business being alive."

Joe Miller, who had recovered more swiftly than the rest, went out on a half-hour scouting trip. He returned with the naked body of a man. His burden was, however, alive. He had blond hair under the mud-streaks, a handsome face, and blue-gray eyes. He said something in German to Clemens and then managed to smile after he had been deposited gently on the deck.

"I found him in hith glider," Joe said. "Vhat vath left of it, that ith. There’th a number of corptheth outthide thith canyon. Vhat you vant to do vith him?"

"Make friends with him," Clemens croaked. "His
people are gone; this area is cleaned out.”

He shuddered. The image of Livy’s body placed on the deck like a mocking gift, the wet hair plastered over one side of her smashed face, the one dark eye staring darkly at him, was getting more vivid and more painful. He felt like sobbing but could not and was glad of it. Weeping would make him fall apart into a cone of ashes. Later, when he had the strength to stand it, he would weep. So near...

The blond man sat up on the deck. He shivered uncontrollably and said, in British English, “I’m cold.”

Miller went below decks and brought up dried fish, acorn bread, bamboo tips, and cheese. The Vikings had stored food to eat when they were in hostile areas where they were forbidden to use their grails.

“That thtupid ath, Bloodakthe, ith thtil alive,” Miller said. “He’th got thome broken ribth and he’th a meth of bruitheth and cutth. But hith big mouth ith in perfect working order. Wouldn’t you know it?”

Clemens began crying. Joe Miller wept with him and
blew his huge proboscis.

“There,” he said, “I feel much better. I never been tho thcared in all my life. When I thaw that vater, like all the mammothth in the world thtampeding towardth uth, I thought, Good-bye Joe. Good-bye Tham. I’ll vake up thomevhere along The River in a new body, but I’ll never thee you again, Tham. Only I vath too terrified to feel thad about it. Yethuth, I vath thcared!

The young stranger introduced himself. He was Lothar von Richthofen, glider pilot, captain of the Luftwaffe of his Imperial Majesty, Kaiser Alfred the First of New Prussia.

“We’ve passed a hundred New Prussias in the last ten thousand miles,” Clemens said. “All so small you couldn’t stand in the middle of one and heave a brick without it landing in the middle of the next. But most of them weren’t as belligerent as yours. They’d let us land and charge our grails, especially after we’d shown them what we had to trade for use of the stones.”

“Trade?”

“Yes. We didn’t trade goods, of course, but all the freighters of old Earth couldn’t carry enough to last out
a fraction of The River. We traded ideas. For one thing, we show these people how to build pool tables and how to make a hair-setting spray from fish glue, deodorized.”

The Kaiser of this area had been, on Earth, a Count von Waldersee, a German field marshal, born 1832, died 1904.

Clemens nodded, saying, “I remember reading about his death in the papers and having great satisfaction because I had outlived another contemporary. That was one of the few genuine and free pleasures of life. But, since you know how to fly, you must be a twentieth-century German, right?”

Lothar von Richthofen gave a brief summary of his life. He had flown a fighter plane for Germany in the Weltkrieg. His brother had been the greatest of aces on either side during that war.

“World War I or II?” Clemens said. He had met enough twentieth-centurians to know some facts—and fancies—about events after his death in 1910.
Richthofen added more details. He had been in World War I. He himself had fought under his brother and had accounted for forty Allied planes. In 1922, while flying an American film actress and her manager from Hamburg to Berlin, the plane had crashed and he had died.

"The luck of Lothar von Richthofen deserted me," he said. "Or so I thought then."

He laughed.

"But here I am, twenty-five years old in body again, and I missed the sad things about growing old, when women no longer look at you, when wine makes you weep instead of laugh and makes your mouth sour with the taste of weakness, and every day is one day nearer death.

"And my luck held out again when that meteorite struck. My glider lost its wings at the first blow of wind, but instead of falling, I floated in my fuselage, turning over and over, dropping, rising again, falling, until I was deposited as lightly as a sheet of paper upon a hill. And then the backflood came, the fuselage was borne by the water, and I was nuzzled gently against the foot of the
mountain. A miracle!"

“A miracle: a chance distribution of events, occurring one time in a billion,” Clemens said. “You think a giant meteor caused that flood?”

“I saw its flash, the trail of burning air. It must have crashed far away, fortunately for us.”

They climbed down from the ship and slogged through the thick mud to the canyon entrance. Joe Miller heaved logs that a team of draft horses would have strained to pull. He shoved aside others, and the three went down through the foothills and to the plains. Others followed them.

They were silent now. The land had been scoured free of trees except for the great iron trees. So deeply rooted were these that most still stood upright. Moreover, where the mud had not settled, there was grass. It was a testimony to the toughness and the steadfast-rootedness of the grass that the millions of tons of water had not been able to rip out the topsoil.

Here and there was the flotsam left by the backflood. Corpses of men and women, broken timber, towels, grails, a dugout, uprooted pines and oaks and yews.
The great mushroom-shaped grailstones, spaced a mile apart along the banks on both sides, were also unbroken and unbent, although many were almost buried in mud.

“The rains will eventually take care of the mud,” Clemens said. “The land slopes toward The River.” He avoided the corpses. They filled him with a prickly loathing. Besides, he was afraid that he might see Livy’s body again. He did not think he could stand it; he would go mad.

“One thing’s sure,” Clemens said. “There’ll be nobody between us and the meteorite. We’ll have first claim on it, and then it’ll be up to us to defend all that treasure of iron from the wolves that will come loping on its scent.

“Would you like to join up? If you stick with me, you’ll have an airplane someday, not just a glider.”

Sam explained a little about his Dream. And he told a little about Joe Miller’s story of the Misty Tower.

“It’s only possible with a great deal of iron,” he said.
“And much hard work. These Vikings aren’t capable of helping me build a steamboat. I need technical knowledge they don’t have. But I was using them to get me to a possible source of iron. I had hoped that there might be enough ore from which Erik’s ax was made for my purpose. I used their greed for the metal, and also Miller’s story, to launch them on this expedition.

“Now, we don’t have to search. We know where there must be more than enough. All we have to do is dig it up, melt it, refine it, shape it into the forms we need. And protect it. I won’t string you along with a tale of easy accomplishment. It may take years before we can complete the boat, and it’ll be damn hard work doing it.”

Lothar’s face blazed with a spark caught from Clemens’ few words. “It’s a noble, magnificent dream!” he said. “Yes, I’d like to join you, I’ll pledge my honor to follow you until we storm Misty Tower! On my word as a gentleman and officer, on the blood of the barons of Richthofen!”

“Just give me your word as a man,” Sam said dryly.

“What a strange—indeed, unthinkable—trio we
Lothar said, "A gigantic subhuman, who must have died at least one hundred thousand years before civilization. A twentieth-century Prussian baron and aviator. A great American humorist born in 1835. And our crew"—Clemens raised his thick eyebrows at the "our"—"tenth-century Vikings!"

"A sorry lot now," Sam said, watching Bloodaxe and the others plow through the mud. All were bruised from head to foot and many limped. "I don't feel so well myself. Have you ever watched a Japanese tenderize a dead octopus? I know how the octopus feels now. By the way, I was more than just a humorist, you know. I was a man of letters."

"Ah, forgive me!" Lothar said. "I've hurt your feelings! No offense! Let me salve your injuries, Mr. Clemens, by telling you that when I was a boy, I laughed many times reading your books. And I regard your Huckleberry Finn as a great book. Although I must admit I did not care for the way you ridiculed the aristocracy in your Connecticut Yankee. Still, they were English, and you are an American."

Erik Bloodaxe decided that they were too battered
and weary to start the job of getting the ship down to The River that day. They would charge their grails at evening, eat, sleep, eat breakfast, and then begin the backbreaking work.

They went back to the ship, took their grails from the hold, and set them on the depressions on the flat top of a grailstone. As the sun touched the peaks of the mountains to the west, the men awaited the roar and the hot, blue flash from the stones. The electrical discharge would power the energy-matter converters within the false bottoms of the grail and, on opening the lids, the men would find cooked meats, vegetables, bread and butter, fruit, tobacco, dreamgum, liquor or mead.

But as darkness settled over the valley, the grailstones remained silent and cold. Across The River, fire sprang up momentarily from the grailstones there, and a faint roar reached them.

But the stones on the west bank, for the first time in the twenty years since the day of Resurrection, did not function.
The men and women felt as if God had failed them. The three-times-a-day offering of the stones had come to seem as natural as the rising of the sun. It was some time before they could ease the sickness in their stomachs to eat the last of the fish, sprouts, and cheese.

Clemens was in a blue funk for a while. But von Richthofen began talking of the necessity of ferrying the grails to the other side so they could eat in the morning. Presently Clemens got up and talked to Bloodaxe. The Norwegian was in a mood even fouler than usual, but he finally admitted that action must be taken. Joe Miller, the German, and a big redheaded Swede named Toke Kroksson trudged back up to the ship and then carried some oars back down. These three, with Clemens, took the grails across in the dugout; and Toke and Joe Miller paddled the dugout back. Miller, Clemens, and von Richthofen settled down to sleep on top of a grailstone. It was clean, since the electrical discharge
had burned off all the mud.

“We’ll have to get under the stone when the rains come,” Clemens said. He lay on his back, his hands under his head, and looked up at the night sky. It was no terrestrial sky, this blaze of twenty thousand stars greater than Venus in her glory and shimmering filaments tentacling out from glittering gas clouds. Some of the stars were so bright that they could be seen as pale phantoms even at noon.

“The meteorite must have smashed some of the grailstones on the west bank,” Sam Clemens said. “And so it broke the circuit. My God, what a circuit! There must be at least twenty million stones hooked together, if the calculations of some are correct.”

“There will be a terrible conflict raging up and down The River,” Lothar said. “The west bankers will attack the east bankers so they can charge their grails. What a war! There must be about thirty-five to thirty-seven billion people in this Rivervalley. All battling to the death for food.”

“The hell of it ith,” Joe Miller said, “that if half get kilt and tho there’th enough room on the grailstoneth, it
von’t do no good. Twenty-four hourth later, the dead vill all be alive again, and it’ll all thtart over again.”

Sam said, “I’m not so sure. I think it’s been established that the stones have something to do with the resurrections. And if half of them are out of commission, there may be a considerable cut in production on the Lazarus line. This meteorite is a saboteur from the skies.”

“I’ve thought for a long time that this world, and our resurrection, are not the work of supernatural beings,” von Richthofen said. “Have you heard the wild tale that’s been going up and down The River? There’s a story that one man woke up before Resurrection Day and found himself in a very weird place. There were millions of bodies around him, floating in the air, nude men, women, and children, their heads shaved, all slowly rotating under some invisible force. This man, an Englishman named Perkin, or Burton, some say, had died on Earth around 1890. He got loose but was intercepted by two beings—human—who put him back to sleep. Then he awoke, like the rest of us, on the
banks of The River.

"Who is behind all this isn’t infallible. They made a mistake with Burton. He got a glimpse of pre-Resurrection, a stage somewhere between our death on Earth and preparation for life on this world. It sounds fantastic, like a wish-fulfillment story. But then again...."

“I’ve heard it,” Sam Clemens said. He thought of telling about seeing Burton’s face through the telescope just before he spotted Livy’s. But the pain of thinking about her was too much for him.

He sat up and cursed and shook his fist at the stars and then began to weep. Joe Miller, squatting behind him, reached a gigantic hand out and touched him softly on the shoulder. Von Richthofen, embarrassed, looked the other way. Presently, he said, "I’ll be glad when our grails are charged. I’m itching for a smoke."

Clemens laughed and dried his tears and said, "I don’t cry easily. But I’ve gotten over being ashamed about it when I do.

"It’s a sad world, just as sad, in most ways, as the old Earth. Yet we have our youthful bodies again, we don’t have to work for food or worry about paying
bills, making our women pregnant, catching diseases. And if we’re killed we rise up the following day, whole and hearty, although thousands of miles from where we died.

“But it’s nothing like what the preachers said it would be. Which isn’t, of course, surprising. And maybe it’s just as well. Who’d want to fly around on aerodynamically unstable wings or stand around all day playing harps badly and screeching out hosannas?”

Lothar laughed and said, “Ask any Chinese or Indian coolie if this isn’t a hell of a better world than the last world. It’s just us spoiled modern Westerners who grumble and look for first and latest causes. We didn’t know much about the operation of our Earthly cosmos, and we know less about this. But we’re here, and we may eventually find out who put us here and why. Meanwhile, as long as there are beautiful and willing women—and there are—cigars, dreamgum, wine, and a good fight, who cares? I’ll enjoy this valley of bright shadows until the good things of life are once more taken from me. Lust to lust until it’s dust to dust.”

They were silent after a while, and Clemens could
not get to sleep until just before the rains. He got down under the mushroom until the downpour ceased. Back on top of the stone, he shivered and turned for several hours, although he was covered with long heavy towels. Dawn came with Miller’s ponderous hand shaking him. Hastily, he climbed down off the stone and got a safe distance from it. Five minutes later, the stone gave forth a blue flame that leaped thirty feet into the air and roared like a lion.

At the same time, the stones across the river bellowed.

Clemens looked at Lothar. “Somebody repaired the break.”

Lothar said, “I’ve got goose pimples. Who is somebody?” He was silent for a while, but before they had reached the west bank, he was laughing and chattering like a guest at a cocktail party. Too cheerful, Clemens thought.

“They’ve never shown their hand before, that I know of,” Sam said. “But this time I guess they had to.”
The next five days were occupied in getting the ship down to the bank. Two weeks more were spent in repairing the *Dreyrugr*. All that time a watch was kept, but no one came into the area. When the ship was finally launched, still minus masts and sails, and was rowed down The River, there was not a live human in sight.

The crew, accustomed to seeing the plains thronged with men and women, were uneasy. The silence was unnerving. There were no animals on this world except for the fish in The River and earthworms in the soil, but the humans had always made enough noise.

"The hyenas’ll be here soon enough," Clemens said to Bloodaxe. "That iron is far more precious than gold ever was on Earth. You want battle? You’ll get enough down your throat to make you vomit."

The Norseman, swinging his ax, winced at the pain in his ribs. "Let them come! They’ll know they’ve been in
a fight to bring joy to the hearts of the Valkyrie!”

“Bull!” Joe Miller said. Sam smiled but walked to a position behind the titanthrop. Bloodaxe was afraid of only one being in the world, but he might lose his never easily controlled temper and go berserk. However, he needed Miller, who was worth twenty human warriors.

The ship traveled steadily for two days during the sunlit hours. At night, one man steered and the crew slept. Early in the evening of the third day, the titanthrop, Clemens, and von Richthofen were sitting on the foredeck, smoking cigars and sipping at the whiskey their grails had given them at the last stop.

“Why do you call him Joe Miller?” Lothar asked.

“His real name is a rattling jawbreaker, longer than any technical term of a German philosopher,” Clemens said. “I couldn’t pronounce it when I first met him; I never did. After he learned enough English to tell me a joke—he was so eager he could hardly wait—I decided to call him Joe Miller. He told me a tale so hoary I couldn’t believe it. I knew it’d been around a long time; I first heard it, in a slightly different form, when I was a boy in Hannibal, Missouri. And I was still
hearing it, much to my disgust, for the hundred thousandth time, when I was an old man. But to have to listen to that story from the lips of a man who’d died one hundred thousand years, maybe a million, before I was born!”

“And the story?”

“Well, there was this traveling hunter who’d been tracking a wounded deer all day. Night came and with it a violent storm. Seeing the light of a fire, the hunter stopped off at a cave. He asked the old medicine man who lived in it if he could spend the night there. And the old medicine man said, ‘Sure, but we’re pretty crowded here. You’ll have to sleep with my daughter.’ Need I go any further?”

“Tham didn’t laugh,” Joe rumbled. “Thometimeth I think he ain’t got a thenthe of humor.”

Clemens tweaked Joe’s projectile-shaped nose affectionately. He said, “Thometimeth I think you’re right. But actually I’m the most humorous man in the world because I’m the most sorrowful. Every laugh is rooted in pain.”

He puffed on his cigar for a while and stared at the
shore. Just before dusk, the ship had entered the area where the last of the intense heat from the meteorite had struck. Aside from the few irontrees, everything had been whistled off in a shock of searing flame. The irontrees had given up their huge leaves to the flames, and even the enormously resistant bark had burned off and the wood beneath, harder than granite, had become charred. Moreover, the blast had tilted or leveled many of these, snapping them off at the base. The grailstones had been blackened and were out of plumb but had retained their shape.

Finally, he said, “Lothar, now is as good a time as any for you to learn something of why we’re on this quest. Joe can tell it in his way; I’ll explain anything you don’t understand. It’s a strange tale, but no stranger, actually, than anything that’s happened here since we all woke up from the dead.”

“T’im thirsty,” Joe said. “Let me get a drink firt.”

The dark-blue eyes, shadowed in the bone rings, focused upon the hollow of the cup. He seemed to peer therein as if he were trying to conjure up the scenes he was about to describe. Guttural, his tongue hitting
certain consonants harder than others, thus giving his English a clanging quality, yet comical with its lisping, voice rising up from a chest deep and resonant as the well of the Delphic oracle, he told of the Misty Tower.

"Thomevhere upon The River, I awoke, naked ath I am now. I vath in a plathe that mutht be far north on thith planet, becauthe it vath colder and the light vath not ath bright. There vere no humanth, yuht uth...uh, titantroph, ath Tham callth uth. Ve had grailth, only they vere much larcher than yourth, ath you can thee. And ve got no beer and vithkey. Ve had never known about alcohol, tho ve had none in our grailth. Ve drank The River vater.

"We thought ve vere in the plathe that you go to vhen you die, that the...uh...godth had given uth thith plathe and all ve needed. Ve vere happy, ve mated and ate and thlept and fought our enemieth. And I vould have been happy there if it had not been for the thyip."

"He means ship," Sam said.

"That’th what I thaid. Thyip. Tho don’t interrupt, Tham. You’ve made me unhappy enough by telling me that there are no godth. Even if I’ve theen the godth."
Lothar said, “Seen the gods?”

“Not egthactly. I thaw where they live. I did thee their thyip.”

Von Richthofen said, “What? What’re you talking about?”

Clemens waved his cigar. “Later. Let him talk. If you interrupt him too much, he gets confused.”

“Where I come from, you don’t talk while another ith talking. Othervithe, you get punched in the nothe.”

Sam said, “With a nose as big as yours, Joe, that must have hurt.”

Miller delicately stroked his proboscis.

“It ith the only vone I have, and I’m proud of it. Novhere in thith part of the valley hath any pygmy got a nothe like mine. Where I come from, your nothe indicateth the thithe of your—what’th your word for it, Tham?”

Sam choked and took the cigar from his lips.

“You were telling us of the ship, Joe.”

“Yeth. No! I vath not! I hadn’t gotten to it yet. But ath I vath thaying, vun day I vath lying on the bank
watching the fifth play. I was thinking about getting up and making a hook and pole to catch them. All of a sudden, I heard a shouting. I looked up. There, coming around the bend of The River, was that terrible monster.

"It was awful. I jumped up. I was going to run away when I saw it had men on its back. They looked like men, but when the monster got closer, I saw they were thpindly little runt with the mange and no notheth to thpeak of. I could have beat them all to death with vone hand, and yet they were riding thith monster Riverthnake like beeth on a bear’th back. Tho...."

Clemens, listening, felt again as he had when he first heard the story. He felt as if he were standing by the side of this creature from the dawn of man. Despite the clanging and lisping and halting and slow groping after words, this Titan spoke impressively. Clemens could feel his panic and his wonder and almost overpowering urge to run away. Clemens could also feel the opposing urge, the primate’s curiosity, the thing that made him, if not wholly a man, at least a near cousin. Behind the
shelving brow lay the gray pulse that would not be content just to exist but must be fed on the shapes of unknown things, on patterns never before seen.

So Joe Miller stayed upon the bank, though his hand closed around the handle of the grail, ready to carry it with him if he had to flee.

The monster floated closer. Joe began to think that it might not be alive. But if it were not, why the great head poised at its front as if to strike? Yet it did not look alive. It gave a feeling of deadness. This did not mean much, of course. Joe had seen a wounded bear pretend death convincingly and then rise up and tear the arm off a fellow hunter.

Moreover, though he had seen the hunter die, he had also seen the hunter alive again, that day he awoke on the banks with others of his kind. And if he, and Joe, too, could come alive again, why couldn’t this petrified snakelike head lose its dead woodenness and seize him in its teeth?

But he ignored his fears and, trembling, approached the monster. He was a Titan, older brother to man, fresh with the dawn and with the primate’s have-to-
A pygmy, mangy as the others but wearing on his brow a glass circlet with a stained-red flaming sun, beckoned to Joe Miller. The others upon the wooden beast stood behind the man with the glass circlet and held spears and strange devices that Joe learned later were bows and arrows. They did not seem frightened to the colossus, but that may have been because they were so tired from their seldom-ceasing rowing against the current that they did not care what happened.

It took a long time for the pygmy chief to get Joe aboard the ship. They came ashore to charge their grails while Joe backed away from them. They ate, and Joe ate also, but at a distance. His fellows had run for the hills, having been also panicked by the ship. Presently, seeing that the Riversnake did not threaten Joe, they slowly approached it. The pygmies retreated to the ship.

And now the chief took a strange object from his grail and held a glowing wire to its tip, and smoke came from it and from the pygmy’s mouth. Joe jumped at the first puff; his fellows scattered for the foothills again. Joe
wondered if the noseless pygmies could be the brood of the dragon. Perhaps her children took this larval form, but, like their mother, they could breathe out fire and smoke?

“But I ain’t a dummy,” Joe said. “It didn’t take me long to figure out the thmoke came from the obchect, which in Englith ith a thigar. Their chief made it plain that if I’d get on the thyip, I could thmoke the thigar. Now, I muth’ve been crathy to do tho, but I wanted to thmoke that thigar. Maybe I thought I’d impreth my tribe, I don’t know.”

He jumped on the ship, his weight causing it to tilt a little on the port. He swung his grail to show them that if they attacked him, he would bash their skulls in with it. They took the hint and did not come close. The chief gave Joe a cigar, and though Joe coughed a little and found the taste of tobacco strange, he liked it. Moreover, when he had drunk beer for the first time, he was entranced.

So Joe decided to go on the Riversnake’s back up The River with the pygmies. He was put to work on a
mighty sweep, and he was called Tehuti.

“Tehuti?” von Richthofen said.

“The Greek form is Thoth,” Clemens said. “To the Egyptians, he looked something like the long-beaked ibis-god. I suppose he must also have reminded them of the baboon-god, Bast, but that tremendous nose outweighed that consideration. So, Thoth, or Tehuti, he became.”

Days and nights flowed by like The River. Sometimes, Joe became tired and wished to be put ashore. By now, he could speak the pygmies’ language, though haltingly. The chief would agree to do as Joe wished since it was obvious that any denial might result in the slaughter of his entire crew. But he would speak sadly of Tehuti’s education ending there, just when he was doing so well. He had been a brute, though with the face of the god of wisdom, and soon he would be a man.

Brute? God? Man?

What were they?

The order was not quite right, the chief would say. The correct sequence, ever upward, was brute, man,
and god. Yet it was true you might see a god disguised as a beast, and man merged insensibly from animal into deity, balanced between the two, and now and then changed into one or the other.

That was beyond the breadloaf-shaped brain of Tehuti. He would squat and scowl at the nearing bank. There would be no more cigars or beer. The people on the bank were his kind, but they were also not his tribe, and they might kill him. Moreover, he was beginning for the first time to experience intellectual stimulation, and that would cease once he was back among the titanthropes.

So he would look at the chief and blink, grin and shake his head, and tell him he was going to stay on the ship. He took his turn at the sweep and resumed his study of the most marvelous of all things: a tongue that knew philosophy. He became fluent in their speech and began to grasp the wonderful things the leader told him, although sometimes it was as painful as grasping a handful of thorns. If this or that idea eluded him, he pursued it, caught it, swallowed it, perhaps vomited it up a score of times. Eventually, he digested it and got some nourishment from it.
The River flowed by. They rowed, always staying close to the shore, where the current was weakest. Days and nights, and now the sun did not climb so high in the heavens but was a little lower at its zenith than it had been the week before. And the air grew colder.

Sam said, “Joe and his party were getting close to the north pole. The inclination of this planet’s equator to the plane of the ecliptic is zero. As you know, there are no seasons; day and night are equal in length. But Joe was approaching the point where he would see the sun always half below the horizon and half above. Or would have if it hadn’t been for the mountains.”

“Yeth. It vath alvayth tvilight. I got cold, though not ath cold ath the men. They vere thyivering their atheth off.”

“His big bulk radiates heat slower than our puny bodies,” Clemens said.

“Pleathe, pleathe! Thyould I talk or jutht keep my big mouth thyut?”

Lothar and Sam grinned at him.
He continued. The wind grew stronger, and the air became misty. He began to get uneasy. He wanted to turn back, but by now he did not want to lose the respect of the leader. He would go every inch of the way toward their unknown goal with them.

“You didn’t know where they were going?” Lothar said.

“Not egthactly. They wanted to get to the headvaterth of The River. They thought maybe the godth lived there, and there the godth vould admit them into the true afterworld. They thaid that thith vorld vathn’t the true vorld. It vath a thtage on the vay to the true vorld. Vhatever that ith.”

One day, Joe heard a rumble that sounded as faintly but yet as near as gas moving within his bowels. After a while, as the noise became like thunder, he knew it was water falling from immense heights.

The ship swung into a bay protected by a finger of land. The grailstones no longer lined The River. The men would have to catch fish and dry them. There was also a store of bamboo tips on the ship; these had been collected in the sunlit region for just such an eventuality.
The leader and his men prayed, and the party began climbing a series of cataracts. Here the superhuman strength of Tehuti–Joe Miller helped them in overcoming obstacles. Other times, his great weight was a hindrance and a danger.

Upward they went, wet because of the ever-present spray. When they came to a cliff smooth as ice for a thousand feet up, they despaired. Reconnoitering, they found a rope dangling from the face of a cliff. It was formed of towels tied together. Joe tested its strength and climbed up, hand over hand, his feet braced against the cliff, until he reached the top. There he turned to watch the others follow him. The chief, first after Joe, tired much easier, and halfway up to the top he could go no farther. Joe pulled him and the extremely heavy rope to the top. He did the same for each man in the party.

“Where in hell did the rope come from?” von Richthofen said.

“Someone had prepared the way for them,” Clemens said. “Given the primitive technology of this planet, no
one could have found a way to get that rope up to the rock around which one end of the rope was tied. Maybe a balloon might have lifted a man up there. You could make a balloon of Riverdragonskin or human skins, you know. You could make hydrogen by passing steam over highly heated charcoal in the presence of a suitable catalyst. But in this world of scarce metal, where’s the catalyst?

“Hydrogen could be made without a catalyst but at an enormous cost in fuel. But there was no evidence of the furnaces needed to make the hydrogen. Besides, why would the towels be left behind, when they’d be needed again? No, some unknown person, let’s call him The Mysterious Stranger, put that rope there for Joe and party. Or for whoever might come along. Don’t ask me who he was or how he did it. Listen. There’s more.”

The party, carrying the rope, walked for several miles in the mist-ridden twilight on a plateau. They came to another cliff where The River broadened out above them into a cataract. It was so wide, it seemed to Joe that there was enough water to float the moon of Earth upon it. He would not have been surprised to see that great silver-and-black orb appear on the brink of the
cataract far above and hurtle down that thunder of waters and be smashed to pieces on the rocks in the maelstrom foot.

The wind became stronger and louder; the mist, thicker. Drops of water condensed on the towels they had now fastened around themselves from head to foot. The cliff before them was as mirror-smooth and perpendicular as the one just ascended. Its top was lost in the fog; it could be only fifty feet high or could be ten thousand. They searched along the foot, hoping for some kind of fissure. And they found one. It was a small doorway at the juncture of plateau and cliff. It was so low, it forced them to get down on hands and knees and crawl. Joe’s shoulders rubbed against the sides of the rock. But the rock was smooth, as if the hole had been made by a man and rubbed until all roughness was gone.

The tunnel led at a slightly less than 45-degree angle upward and through the mountain. There was no estimating its distance. When Joe came out at the other end, however, his shoulders and hands and knees were rubbed raw and bleeding even with the protection of towels.
“I don’t understand,” von Richthofen said. “It seems to me that the mountains were shaped there to prevent men from getting to the end of The River. Why was this tunnel bored through solid rock to give intruders passage? And why wasn’t a tunnel placed in the first cliff?”

“A tunnel in the first cliff might have been visible to whatever sentinels or patrols there are in that area,” Clemens said. “But the second cliff was hidden in mist.”

“That chain of white towels would be even more outstanding,” the German said.

“Maybe it was placed there not too long before Joe got there,” Clemens said.

Von Richthofen shivered.

“For Heaven’th thaketh, let me tell thith! After all, it ith my tale.”

“And a big one, too,” Clemens said, looking at Joe’s huge buttocks.

“Thtickth and thtoneth may break my boneth.”
The party pushed on over another tableland for about ten miles. They slept or tried to, ate, and began climbing. Now, though the mountains were very steep and rough, they were scalable. Their chief enemy was lack of oxygen. They gasped for breath and had to halt often to rest.

By now Joe’s feet were hurting him, and he was limping. He did not ask if he could rest. As long as the others walked, so would he.

“Joe can’t stay on his feet as long as a human,” Clemens said. “All of his species suffer from flat feet. Their weight is just too much for a biped that size. I wouldn’t be surprised if his kind became extinct on Earth because of broken arches.”

“I know one thpethimen of Homo thapienth who’th going to suffer from a broken nothe if he don’t keep hith nothe out of my buthineth, which ith telling thith thtory,” Joe said.
They climbed until The River, broad as it was, was only a thread below them. Much of the time they could not see even that thread because of the clouds. Snow and ice made climbing even more dangerous. Then they found a way downward to another plateau and groped through the fog against a wind that howled and beat at them.

They found themselves beside a tremendous hole in the mountains. Out of the hole rushed The River, and on every side except Riverward the mountains rose straight and smooth. The hole was the only way to go. Out of it blasted a roar so loud they could not hear each other, the voice of a god who spoke as loud as death.

Joe Miller found a narrow ledge entering the cave high above the waters. Joe noticed that the leader had now dropped back behind him. After a while, the titanthrop became aware that all the pygmies were looking to him as their guide and helper. When they shouted to make themselves heard above the bellow, they called him Tehuti. There was nothing unusual in that, but before this he had detected overtones of jesting in their use of the name. No more. Now he was truly their Tehuti.
Clemens interrupted again. “It was as if we called the village idiot Jehovah or something like that. When men have no need of gods, they mock them. But, when afraid, they treat them with respect. Now, you might say, Thoth was leading them into the opening into the Underworld.

“Of course, I’m only indulging in mankind’s vice of trying to make a symbol out of coincidence. If you scratch any dog, you’ll scare out a flea.”

Joe Miller was breathing heavily through his grotesque nose, and the vast chest rose and fell like a bellows. Clearly, the reliving of that experience had aroused the old terror in him.

The ledge was not like the tunnel in the mountain. It had not been prepared. It was rough, and there were gaps in it, and sometimes it ran so high that Joe had to crawl to squeeze between the ledge and the roof of the cavern. The darkness blinded him as if his eyes had been plucked out. His sense of hearing did not help him; the bellow filled his ears. Only his touch was left to guide him, and he was so agitated that he sometimes wondered if that were betraying him. He would have
quit except that, if he did, the men behind him would not have been able to go on.

“Ve thtopped tvithe to eat and vonthe to thleep,” Joe said. “Jutht when I vath beginning to think ve might crawl until ve ran out of food, I thaw a grayneth ahead. It vathn’t a light. Jutht a leththening of the darkneth.”

They were out of the cave, in the open air, on the side of the mountain. Several thousand feet below them was a sea of clouds. The sun was hidden behind the mountains, but the sky above was not yet dark. The narrow ledge continued, and they crawled on their bloodied hands and knees downward now, since the ledge had narrowed to nothing.

Trembling, they clung to the tiniest of fingerholes. A man slipped and fell and clutched another man. Screaming, both disappeared into the clouds.

The air became warmer.

“The River was giving up its heat,” Clemens said. “It not only originates at the north pole, it also empties there after picking up heat in its serpentine wanderings
over the entire planet. The air at the north pole is cold but not nearly as cold as that on Earth. This is all speculation, of course.”

The party came to another shelf on which they could stand, facing the mountain, and proceed sidewise, like crabs. The shelf curved around the mountainside. Joe halted. The narrow valley had widened into a great plain. He could hear, far below, the dash of surf against rock.

Through the twilight, Joe could see the mountains ringing the sea of the north pole. The cloud-covered waters formed a body about sixty miles in diameter. The clouds were thicker at the opposite end of the sea. He didn’t know why then, but Sam had explained that the clouds hid the mouth of The River where the warm waters came into contact with the cold air.

Joe took a few more steps around the curve of the ledge.

And he saw the gray metal cylinder sitting on the path before him.

For a moment, he did not understand what it was, it looked so alien. It was so unexpected. Then it flowed
into familiar lines, and he knew it was a grail left by a man who had come before him on this dangerous path. Some unknown pilgrim had survived the same perils as he. Up to that point, that is. He had put the grail down to eat. The lid was open, and there was the stinking remnant of fish and moldy bread within it. The pilgrim had used the grail as a pack, perhaps hoping he might come across a grailstone and recharge it.

Something had happened to him. He would not have left the grail there unless he had been killed or had been so frightened he had run away without it.

At this thought, Joe’s skin chilled.

He went around the outcropping that was sitting at a point where the ledge went around a shoulder of granite. For a moment, his view of the sea was blocked.

He went around the outcropping—and he cried out.

The men called and asked what troubled him.

He could not tell them because the shock had taken away his newly learned speech, and he spoke in his native tongue.
The clouds in the middle of the sea had rolled away for a few seconds. The top of a structure projected from the clouds. It was cylindrical and gray, like the top of a monster grail.

Mists rose and fell around it, now revealing, now veiling.

Somewhere in the mountains ringing the polar sea, a break existed. At that moment, the low sun must have passed this notch in the range. A ray of light fell through the notch and struck the top of the tower.

Joe squinted his eyes and tried to see into the brightness of the reflection.

Something round had appeared just above the top of the tower and was settling down toward it. It was egg-shaped and white, and it was from this that the sun was sparkling.

The next instant, as the sun passed by the notch, the sparkle died. The tower and the object above it faded into darkness and mist. Joe, crying out at the sight of the flying object, stepped back. His leg struck the grail left by the unknown pilgrim.

He swung his arms to regain his balance, but not
even his apelike agility could save him. He toppled backward, bellowing horror as he turned over and over. Once he glimpsed the faces of his companions, a row of dark brown objects with the darker O’s of mouths, watching his descent to the clouds and waters beneath.

“I don’t remember hitting the vater,” Joe said. “I awoke translated about twenty miles from where Tham Clementh vath. That vath a plathe vhere Northemen of the tenth thentury A.D. lived. I had to thtart learning a new language all over again. The little notheleth people vere thcared of me, but they wanted me to fight for them. Then I met Tham, and ve became buddieth.”

They were silent for a while. Joe lifted his glass to his thin and chimpanzee-flexible lips and poured out the rest of the liquor. Somber, the other two watched him. The only sign of brightness about them was the glow of their cigar ends.

Von Richthofen said, “This man who wore a glass circlet with a sunburst. What did you say his name was?”

“I didn’t.”
"Well, then, what was it?"

"Ikhnaton. Tham knowth more about him than I do, and I lived for four yeartth with him. At leatht, that’th vhat Tham thayth. But”—here Joe looked smug—"I know the man and all Tham knowth ith a few hithtorical factth, tho-called."
von Richthofen said good night and went below decks. Sam paced back and forth, stopping once to light a cigarette for the helmsman. He wanted to sleep but could not. Insomnia had been skewering him for years; it drove through the middle of his brain, which spun on it like a wild gear, disengaged from his body's need for rest.

Joe Miller sat hunched against the railing and waited for his friend—the only man he trusted and loved—to go below decks. Presently his head drooped, the bludgeon-nose describing a weary arc, and he snored. The noise was like that of trees being felled in the distance. Sequoias split, screeched, cracked. Vast sighings and bubblings alternated with the woodchoppers’ activities.

"Thleep veil, little chum," Sam said, knowing that Joe dreamed of that forever-lost Earth where mammoths and giant bears and lions roamed and where beautiful—
to him—females of his own species lusted after him. Once he groaned and then whimpered, and Sam knew that he was dreaming again of being seized by a bear which was chomping on his feet. Joe’s feet hurt day and night. Like all of his kind, he was too huge and heavy for bipedal locomotion. Nature had experimented with a truly giant subhuman species and then she had dismissed them as failures.

“The Rise and Fall of the Flatfeet,” Sam said. “An article I shall never write.”

Sam gave a groan, a weak echo of Joe’s. He saw Livy’s half smashed body, given him briefly by the waves, then taken away. Or had she really been Livy? Had he not seen her at least a dozen times before while staring through the telescope at the multitudes on the banks? Yet, when he had been able to talk Bloodaxe into putting ashore just to see if the face were Livy’s, he had always been disappointed. Now there was no reason to believe the corpse had been his wife’s.

He groaned again. How cruel if it had been Livy! How like life! To have been so close and then to have her taken away a few minutes before he would have
been reunited with her. And to have her cast upon the decks as if God—or whatever sneering forces ran the universe—were to laugh and to say, “See how close you came! Suffer, you miserable conglomeration of atoms! Be in pain, wretch! You must pay with tears and agony!”

“Pay for what?” Sam muttered, biting on his cigar. “Pay for what crimes? Haven’t I suffered enough on Earth, suffered for what I did do and even more for what I didn’t do?”

Death had come to him on Earth, and he had been glad because it meant the end forever to all sorrow. He would no longer have to weep because of the sickness and deaths of his beloved wife and daughters nor gloom because he felt responsible for the death of his only son, the death caused by his negligence. Or was it carelessness that had made his son catch the disease that killed him? Had his unconscious mind permitted the robe to slip from little Langdon, while taking him for a carriage ride that cold winter day?

“No!” Sam said so loudly that Joe stirred and the helmsman growled something in Norse.
He smacked his fist against his open palm, and Joe muttered again.

"God, why do I have to ache now with guilt for anything I’ve done?" Sam cried. "It doesn’t matter now! It’s all been wiped out; we’ve started with clean souls."

But it did matter. It made no difference that all the dead were once more alive and the sick were healthy and the bad deeds were so remote in time and space that they should be forgiven and forgotten. What a man had been and had thought on Earth, he still was and thought here.

Suddenly, he wished he had a stick of dreamgum. That might remove the clenching remorse and make him wildly happy.

But then it might intensify the anguish. You never knew if a horror so terrifying would come that you wanted to die. The last time he had taken the gum, he had been so menaced by monsters that he had not dared try the gum again. But maybe this time...no!

Little Langdon! He would never see him again,
never! His son had been only twenty-eight months old when he had died, and this meant that he had not been resurrected in the Rivervalley. No children who had died on Earth before the age of five had been raised again. At least, not here. It was to be presumed that they were alive somewhere, probably on another planet. But for some reason, whoever was responsible for this had chosen not to place the infant dead here. And so Sam would never find him and make amends.

Nor would he ever find Livy or his daughters, Sarah, Jean, and Clara. Not on a River said to be possibly twenty million miles long with possibly thirty-seven billion people on its banks. Even if a man started at one end and walked up one bank and looked at every person on that side and then, on reaching the end, walked back down the other side and did not miss a person, he would take—how long? A square mile a day would mean a round trip of, say 365 into 40,000,000—that was that? He wasn’t any good at doing sums in his head, but it must be over 109,000 years.

And even if a man could do this, could walk all those weary miles and make sure he never missed a face, at the end of over one hundred thousand years he still
might not find the face. The longed-for person might have died somewhere ahead of the searcher and been translated back down The River, behind the searcher. Or the searchee may have passed by the searcher during the night, perhaps while the searchee was looking for the searcher.

Yet there might be another way to do this. The beings responsible for this Rivervalley and the resurrection might have the power to locate anybody they wished to. They must have a central file or some means of ascertaining the identity and location of the valley dwellers.

Or, if they did not, they could at least be made to pay for what they had done.

**Joe Miller**’s story was no fantasy. It had some very puzzling aspects, but these hinted at something comforting. That was, that some nameless person—or being—wanted the valley dwellers to know about the tower in the mists of the north polar sea. Why? Sam did not know, and he could not guess. But that hole had been bored through the cliff to enable human beings to
find out about the tower. And in that tower must be the light to scatter the darkness of ignorance. Of that Sam was sure. And then there was the widespread story of the Englishman, Burton or Perkin, probably Burton, who had awakened prematurely in the preresurrection phase. Was the awakening any more of an accident than the hole bored through the polar cliff?

And so Samuel Clemens had had his first dream, had nourished it until it had become The Great Dream. To make it real, he needed iron, much iron. It was this that had caused him to talk Erik Bloodaxe into launching the expedition in search of the source of the steel ax. Sam had not really expected that there would be enough of the metal to build the giant boat, but at least the Norse were taking him upRiver, closer to the polar sea.

Now, with a luck that he did not deserve—he really felt he deserved nothing good—he was within reach of more iron than he could possibly have hoped for. Not that that had kept him from hoping.

He needed men with knowledge. Engineers who would know how to treat the meteorite iron, get it out, melt it down, reshape it. And engineers and technicians
for the hundred other things needed.

He toed Joe Miller’s ribs and said, “Get up, Joe. It’ll be raining soon.”

The titanthrop grunted and rose like a tower out of a fog and stretched. Starlight glinted on his teeth. He followed Sam across the deck, the bamboo planks creaking under the eight hundred pounds. From below, somebody cursed in Norse.

The mountains on both sides were covered with clouds now, and the darkness was spreading over the valley and shutting off the insane glitter of twenty thousand giant stars and glowing gas sheets. Soon it would rain hard for half an hour, and then the clouds would disappear.

Lightning streaked on the eastern bank; thunder bellowed. Sam stopped. Lightning always made him afraid, or, rather, the child in him afraid. Lightning streaked through him and showed him the haunted and haunting faces of those he had injured or insulted or dishonored and behind them were blurred faces reproaching him for nameless crimes. Lightning twisted through him; then he believed in an avenging God out to
burn him alive, to drown him in searing pain. Somewhere in the clouds was the Wrathful Retributor, and He was looking for Sam Clemens.

Joe said, “There’th thunder thomevhere farther down The River. No! It ain’t thunder! Lithen! Can’t you hear it? It’th thomething funny, like thunder but different.”

Sam listened while his skin prickled with cold. There was a very faint rumble downRiver. He got even colder as he heard a louder rumble from upRiver.

“What the hell is it?”

“Don’t get thcared, Tham,” Joe said. “I’m vith you.” But he was shiverering, too.

Lightning spread a filamented whiteness on the east bank.

Sam jumped and said, “Jesus! I saw something flicker!”

Joe moved next to him and said, “I thaw it! It’th the thyip! You know, the vun I thaw above the tower. But it’th gone!”

Joe and Sam stood silent, peering into the darkness. Lightning exploded again, and this time there was no
white eggshape high above The River.

“It flickered out of nothing and went back to nothing. Like a mirage,” Sam said. “If you hadn’t seen it, too, I’d have thought it was an illusion.”

Sam awoke on the deck. He was stiff, cold, and confused. He rolled over and squinted his eyes at the sun just clearing the eastern range.

Joe was on his back beside him, and the helmsman was sleeping beside the wheel.

But it was not this that brought him to his feet. The gold of the sun had faded out as he brought his gaze down; green was everywhere. The muddied plains and mountains, with straws and stubs of debris, were gone. There was short grass on the plains, tall grass and bamboo on the hills, and the giant pine, oak, yew, and iron tree everywhere on the hills.

“Business as usual,” Sam muttered, wisecracking, though unconsciously, even in his shock. Something had put all aboard the Dreyrugr asleep, and while they were unconscious, the incredible work of clearing off
the mud and replanting the vegetation had been done. This section of The River was reborn!
He felt insignificant, as weak and helpless as a puppy. What could he, or any human, do to combat beings with powers so vast they could perform this miracle?

Yet there had to be an explanation, a physical explanation. Science and the easy control of vast forces had done this; there was nothing supernatural about it.

There was one comforting hope. One of the unknown beings might be on the side of mankind. Why? *In what mystical battle?*

By then the entire ship was aroused. Bloodaxe and von Richthofen came up on deck at the same time. Bloodaxe frowned at seeing the German there because he had not authorized him to be on the poop deck. But the sight of the vegetation shook him so much that he forgot to order him off.

The sun's rays struck down upon the gray mushroom shapes of the grailstones. They sparkled upon hundreds
of little exhalations, mounds of seeming fog, that had
suddenly appeared on the grass near the stones. The
mounds shimmered like heat waves and abruptly
coalesced into solidity. Hundreds of men and women
lay upon the grass. They were naked, and near each
was a pile of towels and a grail.

"It's a wholesale translation," Sam murmured to the
German. "Those who died as a result of the western
grails being shut off. People from everywhere. One
good thing, it'll be some time before they can get
organized, and they won't know there's a source of
iron under their feet."

Lothar von Richthofen said, "How will we find the
meteorite? All traces of it must be covered up."

"If it's still there," Sam said. He cursed. "Anybody
who can do this overnight shouldn't have any trouble
removing a meteorite, even of that size."

He groaned and said, "Or maybe it struck in the
middle of The River and is now drowned under a
thousand feet of water!"

"You look depressed, my friend," Lothar said.
"Don't. In the first place, the meteorite may not have
been removed. In the second place, what if it is? You can’t be worse off than you were before. And there are still wine, women, song.”

“I can’t be satisfied with that,” Sam said. “Moreover, I cannot conceive that we were raised from the dead so that we might enjoy ourselves for eternity. There’s no sense to a belief like that.”

“Why not?” Lothar said, grinning. “You don’t know what motives these mysterious beings have for creating all this and placing us here. Maybe they feed upon feelings.”

Sam was interested. He felt some of his depression lift. A new idea, even though it was in itself depressing, exhilarated him.

“You mean we might be emotional cattle? That our herders might dine upon large juicy steaks of love, ribs of hope, livers of despair, briskets of laughter, hearts of hate, sweetbreads of orgasm?”

“It’s only theory,” Lothar said. “But it’s as good as any I’ve heard and better than most. I don’t mind them feeding off me. In fact, I may be one of their prize bulls, in a manner of speaking. Speaking of which, look at
that beauty there. Let me at her!"

**BRIEFLY** illuminated, Sam now plunged back into the dark shadows. Perhaps the German was right. In which case, a human being had as much chance against the unknown as a prize cow had in outwitting her masters. Still, a bull could gore, could kill before he met inevitable defeat.

He explained the situation to Bloodaxe. The Norwegian looked doubtful. "How can we find this fallen star? We can’t dig up the ground everywhere looking for it. You know how tough the grass is. It takes days to dig even a small hole with stone tools. And the grass soon grows to fill up the hole."

"There must be a way," Sam said. "If only we had a lodestone or some kind of metal detector. But we don’t."

Lothar had been busy waving at the statuesque blonde on the shore, but he had been listening to Sam. He turned and said, "Things look different from the air. Forty generations of peasants can plow land over an ancient building and never know it. But an airman can"
fly over that land and see at once that something lies buried there. There is a difference in coloration, of vegetation sometimes, though that wouldn’t apply here. But the earth reveals subterranean things to him who flies high. The soil is at a different level over the ruins.”

Sam became excited. “You mean that if we could build a glider for you, you might be able to detect the site?”

“That would be very nice,” Lothar said. “We can do that some day. But it won’t be necessary to fly. All we have to do is climb high enough on the mountains to get a good view of the valley.”

Sam swore joyfully. “It was a stroke of luck, picking you up! I never would have known about that!”

He frowned. “But we may not be able to climb high enough. Look at those mountains. They go straight up, smooth as a politician denying he ever made a campaign promise.”

Bloodaxe asked impatiently what they were talking about. Sam replied. Bloodaxe said, “This fellow may be of some use after all. There is no great problem, no unsurmountable one, anyway, if we can find enough
flint. We can chop steps up for a thousand feet. It will take much time, but it will be worth it.”

“And if there is no flint?” Sam said.

“We could blast our way up,” Bloodaxe said. “Make gunpowder.”

“For that we need human excrement, of which there is no dearth,” Sam said. “And the bamboo and pine can give us charcoal. But what about sulfur? There may be none within a thousand miles or more.”

“We know there’s plenty about seven hundred miles downRiver,” Bloodaxe said. “But first things first. One, we have to locate the meteorite. Two, having done that, we must put off any digging for it until we have established a fort to hold it. I tell you, we may be the first to it, but we won’t be the only ones. The wolves will be coming from upRiver and downRiver now, sniffing for it. There will be many, and we will have to fight to hold the iron. So—first we locate the star, then we dig in to keep it.”

Sam swore again. “We might be going right past it right now!” he said.

“Then we’ll put in here,” Bloodaxe said. “It’s as
good a place as any to start. Besides, we have to have breakfast.”

Three days later, the crew of the Dreyrugr had determined that there was no flint or chert in the immediate area. Any that might have been there before must have been burned away by the impact of the meteorite. And when the new soil and vegetation had been laid down, it had contained no stone.

Sometimes rock useful for making tools and weapons could be found in the foothills, at the base of the mountains. Or, if the mountains were broken at the base, as they sometimes were, they yielded workable rock. This area was barren.

“We’re out of luck,” Sam moaned one night while talking to von Richthofen. “We haven’t any way to find the meteorite. And even if we did, we would have no means for digging down to it. And if we could do that, how would we mine it? Nickel-iron is a very dense and hard material.”

“You were the world’s greatest humorist,” Lothar said. “Have you changed a great deal since you were
“What’s that got to do with it?” Sam said. “A humorist is a man whose soul is black, black, but who turns his curdles of darkness into explosions of light. But when the light dies out, the black returns.”

Sam stared into the bamboo fire for a while. There were faces in there, compact, squeezed down, then elongating, spreading out, soaring upward—as the sparks fly—and thinning out until the night and the stars absorbed them. Livy, mournful, spiraled up. His daughter Jean, her face as still and cold as when she lay in the casket, on fire but icy, her lids shut, wavered and passed up with the smoke. His father in his casket. His brother Henry, his features burned and blistered by the steam boiler explosion. And then a smiling, grinning face, that of Tom Blankenship, the boy who was the model for Huckleberry Finn.

There had always been in Sam the child who wanted to float forever on a raft down the Mississippi, having many adventures but no responsibilities. Now he had the chance to drift forever on a raft. He could have uncounted numbers of thrilling experiences, could meet
enough dukes and counts and kings to satisfy the most eager. He could be lazy, could fish, could talk night and day, wouldn’t ever have to work for a living, could drift for a thousand years doing exactly as he pleased.

The trouble was that he could not do exactly as he wanted. There were too many areas where grail-slavery was practiced. Evil men took captives and deprived their prisoners of the luxuries given by their grails: the cigars, liquor, dreamgum. They kept the prisoner half starved, just alive enough so his grail could be used. They tied the slaves’ hands and feet together, like chickens on the way to market, so they could not kill themselves. And if a man did succeed in committing suicide, then he was translated someplace else thousands of miles away and like as not would find himself in the hands of grail-slavers again.

Moreover, he was a grown man and just would not be as happy as a boy on a raft. No, if he went journeying on The River, he needed protection, comfort, and, undeniable desire, authority. Also, there was his other great ambition to be pilot of a Riverboat.
He had attained that for a while on Earth. Now, he would be a captain of a Riverboat, the largest, fastest, most powerful Riverboat that had ever existed, on the longest River in the world, a River that made the Missouri-Mississippi and all its tributaries, and the Nile, the Amazon, the Congo, the Ob, the Yellow River, all strung together, look like a little Ozark creek. His boat would be six decks high above the waterline, would have two tremendous sidewheels, luxurious cabins for the many passengers and crew, all of whom would be men and women famous in their times. And he, Samuel Langhorne Clemens, Mark Twain, would be the captain. And the boat would never stop until it reached the headwaters of The River, where the expedition would be launched against the monsters who had created this place and roused all of mankind again to its pain and disappointments and frustrations and sorrows.

The voyage might take a hundred years, maybe two or three centuries, but that was all right. This world did not have much, but it had more than enough time.

Sam warmed himself in the glow of his images, the mighty Riverboat, himself as captain in the wheelhouse, his first mate perhaps Mr. Christopher Columbus or
Mr. Francis Drake, his Captain of Marines—no, not Captain, Major, since there would be only one aboard with the title of Captain—Sam Clemens, himself—his Major would perhaps be Alexander the Great or Julius Caesar or Ulysses S. Grant.

A pinprick of a thought pierced the glorious balloon sailing along in the wind of his dream. Those two ancient bastards, Alexander and Caesar, would never submit long to a subordinate position. They would plot from the very beginning to seize the captainship of the paddle wheeler. And would that great man, U. S. Grant, take orders from him, Sam Clemens, a mere humorist, a man of letters in a world where letters did not exist?

The luminescent hydrogen of his images whistled out. He sagged. He thought of Livy again, so near but snatched away by the very thing that had made his other dream possible. She had been shown to him briefly, as if by a cruel god, and then taken away again. And was that other dream possible? He could not even find the vast store of iron that must be somewhere around here.
You look tired and pale, Sam,” Lothar said. Sam stood up and said, “I’m going to bed.”

“What, and disappoint that seventeenth-century Venetian beauty who’s been making eyes at you all evening?” Lothar said.

“You take care of her,” Sam said. He walked away. There had been some moments during the past few hours when he had been tempted to take her off to his hut, especially when the whiskey from the grail had first warmed him. Now he felt listless. Moreover, he knew that his guilt would return if he did take Angela Sangeotti to bed. He had suffered recurrent pangs during the twenty years here with the ten women who had been his mates. And now, strangely enough, he would feel guilty not only because of Livy but also because of Temah, his Indonesian companion for the last five years.

“Ridiculous!” he had said to himself many times.
“There is no rational reason why I should feel guilty about Livy. We’ve been separated for so long that we would be strangers. Too much has happened to both of us since Resurrection Day.”

His logic made no difference. He suffered. And why not? Rationality had nothing to do with true logic; man was an irrational animal, acting strictly in accordance with his natal temperament and the stimuli to which he was peculiarly sensitive.

So why do I torture myself with things that cannot be my fault because I cannot help my responses?

Because it is my nature to torture myself for things that are not my fault. I am doubly damned. The first atom to move on primeval Earth and to knock against another atom started the chain of events that have led, inevitably, mechanically, to my being here and walking through the dark on a strange planet through a crowd of aged youths from everywhere and every-time to a bamboo hut where loneliness and guilt and self-recreinations, all rationally unnecessary but nevertheless unavoidable, await me.

I could kill myself, but suicide is useless here. You
wake up twenty-four hours later, in a different place but still the same man who jumped into The River. Knowing that another jump won't solve a thing and probably will make you even more unhappy.

“Stone-hearted relentless bastards!” he said and shook his fist. Then he laughed sorrowfully and said, “But They can’t help their hard hearts and cruelty any more than I can help what I am. We’re all in it together.”

This thought did not, however, make him wish any the less to get his revenge. He would bite the hand that had given him eternal life.

His bamboo hut was in the foothills under a large iron tree. Although only a shack, it represented genuine luxury in this area, where stone tools to build houses were a rarity. The translatees had had to settle for makeshift housing, bamboo plants bent and tied together with grass ropes at the top and sides and covered with huge elephant-ear leaves from the iron trees. Of the five hundred varieties of bamboo in the valley, some could be split and made into knives, which, however, easily lost their edge.
Sam entered his hut, lay down on the cot, and covered himself with several big towels. The faint sound of distant revelry disturbed him. After tossing for a while, he gave in to the temptation to chew a piece of dreamgum. There was no predicting what its effects might be: ecstasy; bright, many-colored shifting shapes; a feeling that all was right with the world; a desire to make love; or abysmal gloom with monsters springing out of the darkness at him; recriminating ghosts from dead Earth; burning in the flames of hell while faceless devils laughed at his screams.

He chewed and swallowed his saliva and knew at once that he had made a mistake. It was too late then. He continued to chew while he saw before him that time when he was a boy and had drowned, or at least was close to it, and would have drowned if he had not been dragged from the waters. That was the first time I died, he thought, and then, no, I died when I was born. That’s strange, my mother never told me about that.

He could see his mother lying on the bed, hair tangled, skin pale, eyelids half-opened, jaw dropped. The doctor was working on the baby—himself, Sam—
while he smoked a cigar. He was saying out of the corner of his mouth to Sam’s father, “Hardly seems worth saving.”

His father said, “You had a choice between saving that and saving Jane?”

The doctor had a shock of bright red hair, a thick drooping red mustache, and pale blue eyes. His face was strange and brutal. He said, “I bury my mistakes. You worry too much. I’ll salvage this bit of flesh, though it’s really not worth doing, and save her, too.”

The doctor wrapped him up and put him on the bed, and then the doctor sat down and began writing in a little black book. Sam’s father said, “Must you write at a time like this?”

The doctor said, “I must write, though I’d get more writing done if I didn’t talk so much. This is a log I keep on all the souls I bring into the world. I intend some day to write a big case history of the infants, find out if any ever amounted to anything. If I can bring one genius, one, into this vale of heavy tears, I will think my life worthwhile. Otherwise, I’ve been wasting my time bringing thousands of idiots, hypocrites, dogs in the
mangers, etc. into this sad place.”

Little Sam wailed, and the doctor said, “Sounds as if he’s a lost soul before he’s dead, don’t he? As if he’s bearing the blame for all the sins of the world on his tiny shoulders.”

His father said, “You’re a strange man. Evil, I think. Certainly not God-fearing.”

“I pay tribute to the Prince of Darkness, yes,” the doctor said.

The room was filled with the odor of blood, the doctor’s boozy breath and cigar, and sweat.

“What’re you going to call him? Samuel? That’s my name, too! It means ‘name of God.’ That’s a joke. Two Samuels, heh? Sickly little devil, I don’t think he’ll live. If he does, he’ll wish he hadn’t.”

His father roared, “Get out of my house, you devil’s spawn! What kind of man are you? Get out! I’ll call in another doctor! I won’t even let it be known that you attended my wife or had anything to do with this or was even in this house. I’ll rid this house of your evil odor.”
The doctor, swaying, threw his dirty instruments into the bag and snapped it shut.

“Very well. But you have delayed my passage through this miserable village of asses. I’m on my way to bigger and better things, my provincial friend. It was only out of the kindness of my heart that I took pity upon you because the quacks that serve this mudhole were out of town. I left the comforts of the tavern to come here and save an infant who would be better off dead, infinitely better. Which reminds me, though I don’t know why, that you must pay my fee.”

“I should throw you out of the house and pay you with nothing but curses!” Sam’s father said. “But a man has to pay his debts no matter what the circumstances. Here’s your thirty pieces of silver.”

“Looks more like paper to me,” the doctor said. “Well, you can call in your dispenser of pills, folly, and death, but just remember that it was Doctor Ecks that dragged your wife and baby from the jaws of death. Ecks, the unknown quantity, the eternal passer-through, the mysterious stranger, the devil dedicated to keeping other poor devils alive, also dedicated to the demon
whiskey, since I can’t abide rum.”

“Out! Out!” Sam’s father shouted. “Out before I kill you!”

“There’s no gratitude in this world,” Doctor Ecks mumbled. “Out of nothing I come, through a world populated by asses I pass, and into nothing I go. Ecks equals nothing.”

Sweating, eyes open and rigid as those of a stone Apollo, Sam watched the drama. The scene and the actors were enclosed in a ball of pale yellow light through which veins of red shot like lightning and then faded out. The doctor turned his face once before he walked through the door of the house in Florida, Missouri, on November 30, 1835. He took the cigar from his mouth and grinned mockingly, revealing long yellow teeth with two abnormally white, abnormally long canines.

As if the scene were a film being shut off, it blinked out. Through the door which had been in Sam’s birthplace and now was the door of the bamboo hut, another figure entered. It was momentarily silhouetted by the bright starlight, then slid into the shadows. Sam
closed his eyes and steeled himself for another frightening experience. He groaned and wished he had not taken the dreamgum. Yet he knew that under the terror was a thread of delight. He hated and enjoyed this. The birth-drama was a fantasy, created by him to explain why he was the kind of man he was. But what was this shadowy figure moving silently and intently as death? From what deep cavern in his mind came this creature?

A baritone voice spoke. “Sam Clemens! Do not be alarmed! I am not here to harm you! I come to help you!”

“And what do you want in repayment for your help?” Sam said.

The man chuckled and said, “You’re the kind of human being I like. I chose well.”

“You mean I chose you to choose me,” Sam replied.

There was a pause of several seconds, and then the man said, “I see. You think I’m another fantasy inspired by the gum. I’m not. Touch me.”
“What for?” Sam said. “As a gum-inspired fantasy, you should know that you can be felt as well as seen and heard. State your business.”

“Entirely? That would take too long. And I don’t dare take much time with you. There are others in this area who might notice. That would be too bad for me, since they are very suspicious. They know there is a traitor among them, but they don’t have the slightest idea who it could be.”

“Others? They?” Sam answered.

“They—we Ethicals—are doing fieldwork in this area now,” the figure said. “This is a unique situation, the first time that a completely unhomogenized assortment of humans has been thrown together. It presents a rare chance for study, and we are recording everything. I’m here as chief administrator, since I’m one of The Twelve.”

“I’ll have to figure you out after I wake up,” Sam replied.

“You are awake, and I exist. I have objective reality. And, I repeat, I don’t have much time.”

Sam started to sit up but was pushed back by a hand
which somehow communicated a sense of great power, muscular and mental. Sam shivered upon feeling it.

“**You’re one of Them,**” he whispered. “**One of Them!**”

He gave up his idea of seizing the man and calling for help.

“**Of them, but not with them,**” the man said. ‘I’m with you human beings, and I intend to see that my people do not complete their filthy project. I have a plan, but a plan that will take much time, much patience, a slow and careful, devious development. I have contacted three humans now; you are the fourth. They are aware of parts of the plan but not all of it. If any one of them should be revealed and interrogated, he could tell the Ethicals only a little. The plan must unfold slowly and everything must appear accidental.

“**Just as the meteorite must appear accidental.**”

Sam did start to sit up then but caught himself before the hand touched him.

“**It was no accident?**”
“No. I have known for some time of your dream of building a Riverboat and going to the end of The River. It would be impossible without iron. So I deflected the meteorite to bring its orbit within this planet’s grip and cause it to crash near you. Not too near you, of course, otherwise you would have died and have been translated far from this area. There are safeguards to prevent such spatial matter from falling on the valley, but I managed to trip them out just long enough for the meteor to get through. Unfortunately, the guardians almost got to the repulsion system in time. When the system went back into action, its effect caused the meteorite to go off the course I’d planned. As a result, we—I mean you—almost got killed. It was just luck that you weren’t. But then I’ve found out that what you call luck is on my side.”

“Then the falling star...?”

“Is a deliberately felled star, yes.”

Sam thought, if he knows so much about me, he must be one of the crew of the Dreyrugr. Unless he’s able to make himself invisible. That isn’t impossible. That egg-shaped ship I saw in the air was invisible; I only saw it
because it was for some reason made visible very briefly. Maybe the lightning interfered with the apparatus that makes the ship invisible.

Then, What am I thinking? This is just another dreamgum fantasy.

The man said, “One of their agents is nearby! Listen carefully! The meteorite wasn’t removed because we didn’t have time. At least, that was my decision. It’s buried under the plains and foothills ten miles from here. Go ten grailstones upRiver.

“You’ll be on the perimeter of the original crater, where several large masses and many small pieces are buried. Start digging. The rest is up to you. I’ll help you when I can, but I can’t do anything obvious.”

Sam’s heart was beating so hard his own voice sounded muted.

“Well do you want me to build a boat?”

“You’ll find out in time. For the present, be happy that you’ve been given what you need. Listen! There’s a huge deposit of bauxite only five miles farther up, under the surface of the mountains, near the base. And near it is a small lode of platinum and two miles up from
it, cinnabar.”

“Bauxite? Platinum?”

“You fool!”

There was the sound of hard breathing. Sam could almost hear the man’s internal struggle to control his disgust and fury. Then, calmly, “You’ll need bauxite for aluminum and platinum for a catalyst for the many things you’ll have in your boat. I haven’t got time to explain. There are several engineers in this area who’ll tell you what to do with the minerals. I must go. He’s getting closer! Just do what I say. And, oh yes, there’s flint thirty miles up River!”

“But….” Sam said. The man was silhouetted briefly and was gone. Sam rose unsteadily and then went to the door. Fires were still blazing on the banks, and small figures were capering in front of them. The stranger was gone. Sam went around to the back of the hut but there was no one there. He looked up at the sky, pale with great gas sheets and bright knots of white, blue, red, and yellow stars. He had hopes he might catch a glimpse of a vehicle winking from visibility to invisibility. But there was nothing.
On returning to the hut, he was startled by a huge figure standing dark and immobile before his door. His heart hammering, he said, “Joe?”

“Yeah,” answered the bass drum voice. Joe advanced to him and said, “There’th been thomevone not human here. I can thmell him. He got a funny ththink, different than you humanth got. You know, it remindth me....”

He was silent for a while. Sam waited, knowing that the ponderous stone wheels were grinding out the flour of thought. Then Joe said, “Vell, I’ll be damned!”

“What is it, Joe?”

“It’th been tho long ago, it happened on Earth, you know, thometime before I got killed there. No, it couldn’t be. Jethuth Chritht, if what you thay ith true about how long ago I lived, it mutht’ve been maybe a hundred thouthand yeartth ago!”

“Come on, Joe, don’t leave me hanging up in the
“Vell, you ain’t going to believe thith. But you got to remember that my nothe hath a memory, too.”

“It ought to, it’s bigger than your brain,” Sam said. “Out with it, or are you trying to kill me with frustrated curiosity?”

“All right, Tham. I vath on the track of a vifthangkruilth tribethman, they lived about ten mileth from uth on the other thide of a big hill that looked like….”

“Never mind the details, Joe,” Sam snapped.

“Vell, it vath late in the day and I knew I vath getting clothe to my enemy becauthe hith printth were tho frethh. And then I heard a noithe that made me think maybe the guy I vath following had backtracked on me and I vath going to get hith club thyoved all the vay up instead of vithe vertha. Tho I dropped to the ground and crawled tovardth the noithe. And gueth vhat I thaw? Great Thcott, vhy didn’t I ever tell you thith before? Vat a dummy I am!”

“I’ll go along with that. So…?”
“Vell, the guy I vath trailing had gotten vind of me, though I don’t know how, thinthe I’m ath thilent ath a veathel thneaking up on a bird, big ath I am. Anyvay, he had backtracked and might’ve come up behind me, maybe. But he vath lying on the ground, out cold ath a cavedigger’th ath. And there vere two humanth thtanding by him. Now, I’m ath brave ath the nektht guy and maybe braver, but thith vath the firtht time I ever thaw humanth, and it vath poththible I vath thcared. Cauthyiouth, anyvay.

“They vere dreththed up in clotheth, vat you’ve dethcribed to me ath clotheth. They had thome funny looking thingth in their handth, about a foot long, thick black thtickth that veren’t vood, looked more like the thsteel that Bloodakthe’th akth ith made of.

“I vath veil hidden but thothe bathtardth had thome vay of knowing I vath there. One of them pointed the thtick at me, and I became uncoonthious. Paththed out. When I came to, the two humanth and the vif vere gone. I got the hell out of there, but I never forgot that thmell.”

Sam said, “That’s the whole story?”

Joe nodded. Sam said, “I’ll be damned! Does that
mean that these...these people...have been keeping an
eye on us for half a million years? Or more? Or are they
the same people?"

“What do you mean?”

Sam told Joe that he must never tell anybody else
what he was going to hear. He knew that the titanarthrop
could be trusted, yet when he explained he felt
misgivings. X had required him not to utter a word to
anybody else.

Joe nodded so much that the silhouette of his nose
was like a log rising and falling in a heavy sea. “It all
tieth in. It’th quite a cointhingdentine, ain’t it? Me theeing
them on Earth, then being taken along on Ikhnaton’th
ekthpedithion and theeing the tower and aithyip, and
now you being picked by thith Ekth to build the
sthteamboath. How about that, huh?”

Sam was so excited that he could not fall asleep until
shortly before dawn. He managed to rouse himself for
breakfast, though he would have preferred to stay in
bed. While the Vikings, the German, Joe, and he were
eating the contents of their grails, he told them a heavily
censored version of his experience. But he told it as if it had been a dream. If he had not had Joe’s olfactory backing for the mysterious stranger’s presence, he would have thought it was a dream.

Von Richthofen, of course, pooh-poohed it, but the Norsemen believed in revelation via dream. Rather, most of them did. Among the inevitable skeptics, unfortunately, was Erik Bloodaxe.

“You want us to go traipsing ten miles and dig just because you had a wild nightmare?” he bellowed. “I’ve always thought you had a mind as weak as your courage, Clemens, and now I know it! Forget about it!”

Sam had been sitting down while eating. He rose to his feet and, glaring beneath the heavy brows, said, “Joe and I will go our own way then. We’ll organize the locals to help us dig, and when we find the iron—as we surely will—you won’t be able to buy your way into the organization for love or money. The first of which, by the way, you’ve never had on Earth or here, and the second of which just doesn’t exist.”

Bloodaxe, bread and steak spewing from his mouth, shouted and swung his ax. “No miserable thrall speaks
to me like that! You’ll dig nothing but your grave, wretch!”

Joe, who had already risen to stand by Clemens, growled and pulled his huge stone ax from his belt sheath. The Vikings stopped eating and walked away to arrange themselves a little behind their chief. Von Richthofen had been grinning while Clemens was describing his dream. The grin remained frozen, and he was quivering. The shaking was not from fright. Now he arose and without a word stood by Clemens’ right side.

He said to Bloodaxe, “You have sneered at the fighting ability and courage of Germans, my Norse friend. Now you will have that sneer shoved down your throat.”

Bloodaxe laughed loudly. “Two gamecocks and an ape! You won’t die easy deaths; I’ll see that it takes you days to find the joy of death! Before I’m done, you’ll be begging me to end your pain!”

“Joe!” Clemens said. “Make sure you kill Bloodaxe first. Then you can get up a little sweat knocking off the rest.”

Joe raised the 50-pound weight of the flint head
above his shoulder and rotated it through a 45-degree arc, back and forth, as easily as if it weighed an ounce. He said, “I can break hith breathbone vith one throw and probably knock down theveral behind him.”

The Norsemen knew that he was not bragging; they had seen him smash too many skulls. He was capable of killing half of them before they killed him, maybe of smashing all of them and still be standing. But they had sworn to defend Bloodaxe to the death and, much as many of them disliked him, they would not break their oath.

There should have been no cowards in the Rivervalley; courage should have become universal. Death was not permanent; a man was killed only to rise again. But those who had been brave on Earth were usually brave here, and those cowardly on Earth were cowardly here. The mind might know that death lasted only a day, but the cells of the body, the unconscious, the configurations of emotion, or whatever it was that made up a man’s character, these did not recognize the fact. Sam Clemens dodged violence and the resultant pain—
which he feared more than violent death—as long as he could. He had fought with the Vikings, swung an ax, wielded a spear, wounded and been wounded, and once even killed a man, though it had been more by accident than skill. But he was an ineffectual warrior. In battle the valves of his heart were turned full open, and his strength poured out.

Sam knew this well, but about this he had no self-reproach or shame.

Erik Bloodaxe was furious and not at all afraid. But if he died, and he probably would, he would never be able to take part in Clemens’ dream of the great Riverboat or storm the citadels of the north pole. And, though he had scoffed at the dream, he still believed in a part of him that dreams could be revelations sent by the gods. Perhaps he was robbing himself of a glorious future.

Sam Clemens knew his man and was betting that his ambitions would overcome his anger. So they did. The king lowered the ax and forced a smile.

"It is not good to question what the gods send until you look into it," he said. "I have known priests who
were given the truth in dreams by Odin and Heimdall, yet they had no hearts for battle and spoke lies except when they spoke for the gods. So we will dig for the iron. If there is iron, good. If not...then we will take up the matter where we left off.”

Sam sighed with relief and wished he could quit shaking. His bladder and bowels pained him with their urgency to evacuate, but he did not dare to excuse himself at that moment. He had to play the role of the man who had the upper hand. Ten minutes later, unable to bear it any longer, he walked off toward the outhouse.

X, the Mysterious Stranger, had said that digging could take place anywhere near the tenth grailstone upriver from their present position. However, the would-be diggers first had to straighten out the locals on who was running things. A Chicago gangster of the ’20s and ’30s, Alfonso Gilbretti, had allied himself with a Belgian coal-mine and steel-mill magnate of the late nineteenth century and a Turkish sultan of the mid-eighteenth. This triumvirate had followed the by now classical pattern of
organizing a nuclear gang from those who had been merciless exploiters of their fellow men in crime, business, and other terrestrial activities. Those who objected to the newly self-constituted rulers had been disposed of the day before, and the gang had determined what share of the grails’ output each “citizen” would pay for “protection.” Gilbretti had picked out a harem of five women, of whom two were willing and one had died already because she had tried to break his head with a grail when he entered her hut the night before.

Clemens knew all this because of the grapevine. He realized that the Vikings would be faced with two hundred toughs and at least a thousand of the so-called militia. Against them would be forty men and twenty women. But the locals were armed only with bamboo spears with fire-hardened tips while the invaders had Riverdragon-armor, flint axes, and flint-tipped spears and arrows. And there was Joe Miller.

Bloodaxe announced from the ship what the Norsemen intended to do. If the locals wanted to participate, they could do so under the rulership of the Norsemen. However, no one would have to
“contribute” any of his grail output and no woman would be taken by force.

Gilbretti hurled a spear and a Sicilian oath at Erik. The Norseman escaped the effects of both and threw his ax. Its edge buried itself in Gilbretti’s chest, and Bloodaxe was down off the ship and on the land and racing after his precious iron weapon, a flint-studded club in hand, before anybody could move. After him came Joe Miller and thirty men. The women shot arrows while a crew launched the last rocket into the toughs. It struck exactly on target, near the rear ranks of the closely arranged Gilbrettians. About forty were either killed, wounded, or stunned.

Within seventy seconds, the Belgian magnate and the Turk were dead, their heads pulped by Joe’s ax, and the others were either casualties or running for their lives.

None got away. The militia saw their chance to get revenge and either beat or stabbed most of them to death. The ten left alive were spreadeagled, and burning bamboo splints were thrust into them. Sam Clemens stood the screaming as long as he was able. He did not
want to make himself unpopular by cutting the fun too short and so he tried to ignore the spectacle. Lothar von Richthofen said that he certainly understood the desire to hurt by those who had been hurt. But he would not put up with this barbarity a moment longer. He strode up to the nearest sufferer and silenced him with a single chop of his ax. He then ordered the others done away with immediately. Erik Bloodaxe might have interfered with this order, since he thought it proper that one’s enemies should be put through some torture to teach them and others a lesson. But he had been stunned by a piece of the rock-shrapnel thrown by the rocket explosion and was out of the picture for a while.

Reluctantly, the militia obeyed, although in their own fashion. They threw the nine survivors into The River, where the fire was certainly put out but not the pain of the splinters themselves. Some thrashed around for several minutes before drowning. And this was strange, since they could have killed the agony in their bowels by killing themselves, knowing they would be alive again and whole again in a short time. Such was the drive of their instincts for survival, they fought to keep their heads above water as long as possible.
Digging did not begin at once. First, the locals had to be organized and definite administrative, judicial, and legislative lines laid down and the military formed. The area constituting the new state had to be defined. Clemens and Bloodaxe argued about this for a while before deciding that three miles each way up and down The River from the site of the digging would make a manageable area. A sort of Maginot Line was built on the borders; this consisted of a twenty-foot-wide strip of two-foot-long bamboo stakes, pointing at various angles, protruding from the ground. The line ran from the base of the mountains down to the bank of The River. Huts were built by the chevaux-de-frise, and spearmen and -women lived in these as garrisons.

A third cheval-de-frise was built on the banks. When this was finished, the dragon ship was dispatched to the point up River where there was a flint mine, if the Mysterious Stranger was to be believed. Bloodaxe stayed behind with about fifteen of his men. He put his
lieutenant, Snorri Ragnarsson, in charge of the
der expedition. Snorri was to bargain with the locals for flint by promising them a share of the iron when it was dug up. If the locals refused to part with the flint, then he was to threaten them. Bloodaxe thought that Joe Miller should go with the ship because the titanthrop's huge size and grotesque features would awe the locals.

Sam Clemens agreed with the Norseman's logic on this point but he did not like the idea of being separated from Joe. Yet he did not want to go on the ship with Joe, because of what Bloodaxe might do in his absence. The king was bad-tempered and arrogant. If he affronted the newly conquered people, he might cause a revolution which could overwhelm the small number of Vikings.

Sam strode back and forth in front of his hut while he smoked and thought furiously. There was iron under the grass, more than enough to realize The Dream, yet he could not even start to dig for it until a multitude of preparations were made. And every step he thought to take was balked because a dozen other problems came up. He was so frustrated, he almost bit through his cigar. The people who were sitting on the flint mine
needed something like the sight of Joe to be softened up for cooperation. But if Joe were absent, Bloodaxe might take advantage of this to kill Sam. He would not do it openly, because he feared Joe, but he could easily arrange an accident.

Sam cursed and sweated. “If I die, I’ll be resurrected somewhere else, so far from this place it might take a thousand years to get back on a canoe. Meanwhile, other men will mine the iron and build *my* Riverboat. Mine! Mine! Not theirs! Mine!”

At this moment, Lothar von Richthofen ran up to him. “I’ve located two of the kind of men you’re looking for. Only one isn’t a man! Imagine that, a female engineer!”

The man, John Wesley O’Brien, was a mid-twentieth-century metallurgical engineer. The woman was half Mongolian, half Russian, and had spent most of her life in mining communities in Siberia.

Sam Clemens shook hands with them and told them briefly what he had to do now and what he expected to do later.
O’Brien said, “If there is a big bauxite deposit near here, then we can probably build the kind of ship you want.”

He was very excited, as any man would be who had given up any hope of carrying on his Terrestrial profession here. There were many like him, men and women who wanted to work if for no other reason than to kill time. There were doctors who had nothing to do but set an occasional broken bone, printers who had no type to set or paper to use, mailmen with no mail to deliver, smiths with no horses to shoe, farmers with no crops to grow, housewives with no children to raise, the food already cooked, housecleaning done in fifteen minutes, and no marketing to do, salesmen with nothing to sell, preachers whose religion was thoroughly discredited by the existence of this world, bootleggers with no means of making grain alcohol, button makers with no buttons, pimps and whores whose professions were ruined by an excess of amateurs, mechanics with no autos, admen with no ads, carpet makers with only grass and bamboo fibers to work with, cowboys without horses or cattle, painters with no paint or canvas, pianists without pianos, railroad men with no
O’Brien continued, “However, you want a steamboat, and that’s not very realistic. You’d have to stop at least once a day to chop wood for fuel, which would mean a long delay even if the locals permitted you to take their limited supply of bamboo and pine trees. Moreover, your axes, the boilers, and other parts would wear out long before you reached the end of your journey, and you wouldn’t have enough space to carry enough iron for replacement parts. No, what you need are electric motors.

“Now, there’s a man in this area I met shortly after translation here. I don’t know where he is just now but he must be somewhere close. I’ll find him for you. He’s an electrical wizard, a late-twentieth-century engineer who knows how to build the type of motors you’ll need.”

“Hold your horses!” Sam said. “Where would you get all the tremendous amounts of electrical power you’d need? Would we have to build our own Niagara Falls to carry along with us?”

O’Brien was a short, slight youth with a plume of
almost orange hair and a face with features so delicate he looked effeminate. He had a crooked smile which managed nevertheless to be charming. He said, “It’s available everywhere up and down The River.”

He pointed at the mushroom shape of the nearest grailstone. “Three times a day, those stones output an enormous electrical power. What’s to prevent us from hooking up power lines to a number of them and storing the discharges to run the boat’s motors?”

Sam goggled for a moment, then said, “Strike me dumb! No, that’s a redundant phrase. I am dumb! Right before my eyes, and I never thought of it! Of course!”

Then he slitted his eyes and lowered his thick, tangled eyebrows. “How in hell could you store all that energy? I don’t know much about electricity, but I do know that you’d need a storage battery taller than the Eiffel Tower or a capacitor the size of Pike’s Peak.”

O’Brien shook his head. “I thought so, too, but this fellow, he’s a mulatto, half Afrikaans, half Zulu, Lobengula van Boom, he said that if he had the materials, he could build a storage device—a batacitor,
he called it—a ten-meter cube, that could hold ten megakilowatts and feed it out a tenth of a volt per second or all at once.

“Now, if we can mine the bauxite and make aluminum wire, and there are many problems in doing even that, we can use the aluminum in circuits and electrical motors. Aluminum isn’t as efficient as copper, but we don’t have copper, and aluminum will do the job.”

Sam’s fury and frustration disappeared. He grinned, snapped his fingers, and made a little leap into the air: “Find van Boom! I want to talk to him!”

He puffed away, the end of his cigar as glowing as the images in his mind. Already, the great white paddle wheeler was steaming (no, electrifying?) up The River with Sam Clemens in the pilothouse, Sam Clemens wearing a Riverboat captain’s cap of Riverdragon leather on his head, Sam Clemens, captain of the fabulous, the unique paddle wheeler, the great vessel churning on the start of its million-mile-plus journey. Never such a boat, never such a River, never such a trip! Whistles blowing, bells clanging, the crew made up
of the great and near-great men and women of all time. From mammoth subhuman Joe Miller of 1,000,000 B.C. to the delicate-bodied but vast-brained scientist of the late twentieth century.

Von Richthofen brought him back to the immediate reality.

“I’m ready to start digging for the iron. But what do you intend to do about Joe?”

Sam groaned and said, “I can’t make up my mind what to do. I’m as tense as a diamond cutter before he makes the first tap. One wrong thing, and the Kohinoor shatters. Okay, okay! I’ll send Joe. I have to take a chance. But being without him makes me feel as helpless as a honeydipper without a bucket, a banker on Black Friday. I’ll tell Bloodaxe and Joe, and you can start your crew. Only we ought to have a ceremony. We’ll all have a snort, and I’ll dig the first shovelful.”

A few minutes later, his stomach warmed up by a big shot of bourbon, cigar in mouth, his speech finished, Sam started to dig. The bamboo shovel had a sharp edge, but the grass was so tough and thick that it was necessary to use the shovel as a machete. Sweating,
swearing, declaring that he had always hated physical exertion and was not cut out to be a ditchdigger, Sam chopped away the grass. On driving the now-dulled shovel into the earth, Sam found he could not bring up even a half shovelful. It would be necessary to hack away at the grass and the dirt between.

“By the great horn spoon!” he said, flinging the shovel down on the ground. “Let some peasant who’s cut out for this drudgery do it! I’m a brain-worker!”

The crowd laughed and set to work with flint and bamboo knives and flint axes. Sam said, “If that iron is ten feet down, it’ll take us ten years to find it. Joe, you’d better bring back plenty of flint, otherwise we’re done for.”

“Do I have to go?” Joe Miller said. “I’ll mithth you, Tham.”

“You gotta go, as all men do,” Sam said. “Don’t worry about me.”
During the next three days, a hole ten feet across and one foot deep was made. Von Richthofen organized the teams so that a new one replaced the previous crew every fifteen minutes. There was no lack of fresh and strong diggers, but delays were caused by the flaking of new flint tools and the making of new bamboo tools. Bloodaxe growled about the damage to the axes and knives, saying that if they were to be attacked, the stone weapons could not cut through the skin of a baby. Clemens begged him for the dozenth time to be allowed to use the steel ax, and Bloodaxe refused.

"If Joe were here, I’d have him take the ax away from him," Clemens said to Lothar. "And where is Joe, anyway? He should be back by now, empty-handed or bearing gifts."

“I think we ought to send somebody in a dugout to find out,” von Richthofen said. “I’d go myself, but I think you still need me around to protect you from
“If something’s happened to Joe, we’ll both need protection,” Sam said. “All right, that Pathan, Abdul, can be our spy. He could wriggle unnoticed through a basket of rattlesnakes.”

At dawn, two days later, Abdul paddled in. He woke Sam and Lothar, who were sleeping in the same hut for mutual protection. In broken English, he explained that Joe Miller was tied up in a strongly built bamboo cage. Abdul had tried to get a chance to free Joe, but the cage had an around-the-clock guard.

The Vikings had been greeted with friendliness and sympathy. The chief of the region had seemed surprised that his flint for their iron would be a very good trade. He had held a big party to celebrate the agreement and had given his guests as much liquor and dreamgum as they wished. The Norse had been overcome while they snored drunkenly. Joe was asleep but had awakened while being tied up. With bare hands only, he had killed twenty men and injured fifteen before the chief had half stunned him with a club against the back of his neck. The blow would have broken anybody else’s neck; it
just reduced his fighting ability enough to permit men to swarm over him and restrain him while the chief hit him twice over the head.

“The chief knows Joe is a mighty warrior,” Abdul said. “Greater than Rustam himself. I overheard some men talking, and they said their chief plans to use Joe as a hostage. He wants to become partners in the iron mine. If refused, he will not kill Joe but will make a slave out of him, although I doubt he can do that. He’ll attack us, kill us, get the iron for himself.

“He can do it. He’s building a huge fleet, many small ships carrying forty men each, hastily put together but serviceable to transport his army. He’ll make an all-out attack with warriors armed with flint weapons, bows and arrows, and heavy war-boomerangs.”

“And who is this would-be Napoleon?” Sam said.

“His men called him King John. They say that he ruled over England when men wore armor and fought with swords. In the time of Saladin. His brother was a very famous warrior, Richard the Lion-Hearted.”

Sam cursed and said, “John Lackland! The black-hearted pussyfooting Prince John! So rotten that the
Thirty minutes later, Sam was shoved into an even deeper gloom. This time, the message came by word-of-mouth grapevine. Thirty miles down River, a huge fleet was sailing toward them. This consisted of sixty large single-masters, each carrying forty warriors. The leader of the armada was a king of an area which had been just outside the destruction caused by the meteorite. His name was Joseph Maria von Radowitz.

"I read about him in school!" von Richthofen said. "Let’s see. He was born in 1797, died about 1853, I believe. He was an artillery expert and a good friend of Frederick Wilhelm IV of Prussia. He was called ‘The Warlike Monk’ because he was a general who also had strict religious views. He died when he was about fifty years old, a disappointed man because he had been dropped from favor. So now he’s alive again, young, and no doubt trying to impose his Puritanism upon others, and killing those who don’t agree with him.”
An hour later, he got word that King John’s fleet had set sail.

“John’s force will get here first,” he told Bloodaxe. “They’ll be faster because the wind and current will be helping them.”

“Teach your grandmother to suck eggs,” Bloodaxe snorted.

“So what do you plan to do?”

“Smash the Englishman first and then destroy the German later,” Bloodaxe replied. He swung his ax and said, “By the shattered hymen of Thor’s bride! My ribs still hurt, but I will ignore the pain!”

Sam did not argue. When he was alone with Lothar, he said, “Fighting against hopeless odds until you die is all very admirable. But it doesn’t pay off in preferred stock. Now, I know you’re going to think I’m as spineless as a cockroach, Lothar, but I have a dream, a great dream, and it transcends all ordinary ideas of faithfulness and morality. I want that boat, Lothar, and I want to pilot it to the end of The River, no matter what!

“If we had a fighting chance, I wouldn’t suggest this. But we don’t. We’re outnumbered and have inferior
weapons. So I’m going to suggest that we make a deal.”

“With whom?” von Richthofen said. He was grim and pale.

“With John. He may be the most treacherous king in the world, although the competition is fierce, but he’s the one most likely to throw in with us. Radowitz’s fleet is bigger than his, and even if John somehow managed to defeat it, he’d be so weakened we could take him. But if we ganged up with John, we could give Radowitz such a beating he’d take off like a hound dog, tail closed down like a latch.”

Von Richthofen laughed and said, “For a moment I thought you were going to propose that we hide in the mountains and then come out to offer our services to the victor. I could not stand the idea of playing coward, of leaving these people to fight alone.”

“I’ll be frank,” Clemens said, “even if I am Sam. I’d do that if I thought it was the only way. No, what I’m suggesting is that we get rid, somehow, of Bloodaxe. He’ll never go along with taking John in as a partner.”

“You’ll have to watch John as if he were a poisonous
“snake,” the German said. “But I see no other way out. Nor do I think it’s treachery to kill Bloodaxe. It’s just insurance. He’ll get rid of you the first chance he gets.”

“And we’ll not really be killing him,” Sam said. “Just removing him from the picture.”

Clemens wanted to talk more about what they should do, but von Richthofen said that there had been enough talk. Sam was putting off the taking of action—as usual. Things had to be done right now.

Sam gave a sigh and said, “I suppose so.”

“What’s the matter?” Lothar said.

“I’m suffering from guilt before I’ve even incurred it,” Sam replied. “I feel like a yellow dog, although there’s no reason I should. None at all! But I was born to feel guilty about everything, even about being born.”

Lothar threw his hands up in disgust and strode off, saying over his shoulder, “Follow me or hang back. But you can’t expect me to think of you as the captain of our boat. Captains don’t drag their feet.”

Sam grimaced but went after him. Lothar talked to twelve men he thought trustworthy enough for what he
The sun began to climb down from the zenith while the details were arranged and then the men went to arm themselves. They came back from their huts with bamboo spears and knives. One had a bamboo bow with six arrows, effective only at close range.

Lothar von Richthofen and Sam Clemens leading, the group strode up to the Norse king's hut. Six Vikings stood guard outside.

"We want to talk to Bloodaxe," Sam said, trying to keep his voice from quavering.

"He's in there with a woman," Ve Grimarsson said.

Sam raised his hand. Lothar ran past him and clubbed Grimarsson over the head. An arrow whistled past Sam's shoulder and stopped in the throat of a guard. Within ten seconds, the others had been killed or wounded too severely to continue fighting. There were shouts from a distance as a dozen other Vikings came running to protect their chief. Bloodaxe, naked, bellowing, his steel ax held high, rushed through the doorway. Von Richthofen lunged with his spear and impaled the Norseman on it. Bloodaxe dropped the ax and staggered back, driven by the German's weight on
the spear, until he slammed into the bamboo wall of the hut. He stared; his mouth worked; blood ran from a corner of his lips; his skin was blue-gray.

The German then yanked the spear out of the Norseman’s belly, and Bloodaxe crumpled.

There was a fight afterward with six of Clemens’ men killed and four wounded. The Vikings did not give up until all were silenced and as dead as their king.

Sam Clemens, panting hoarsely, splashed with blood from others and bleeding from a gash on his shoulder, leaned on his spear. He had killed one man, Gunnlaugr Thorfinnsson, puncturing his kidney from behind while the Viking was thrusting at von Richthofen. Too bad about Gunnlaugr. Of all the Norsemen, he enjoyed Sam’s jokes the most. Now he was stabbed in the back by his friend Sam Clemens.

I’ve fought in thirty-eight battles, Sam thought, and I’ve slain only two men. The other was a severely wounded Turk struggling to get to his feet. Sam Clemens, the mighty warrior, great-hearted hero. Thinking thus, he gazed with the horror and fascination that corpses had always had for him and would have if
he lived ten thousand years.

And then he squawked with fright and yanked his left ankle away in a frantic effort to escape the hand gripping it. Unable to do so, he lifted his spear to drive it into the man who held him. He looked down into the pale blue eyes of Erik Bloodaxe. Life had surged up in Bloodaxe for a moment. The glaze was gone from his eyes and the skin was not so gray-blue. His voice was weak but strong enough for Sam, and others nearby, to hear him.

“Bikkja! Droppings of Ratatosk! Listen! I will not let you go until I have spoken! The gods have given me the powers of a voluspa. They want revenge for your treachery. Listen! I know there is iron beneath this blood-soaked grass. I feel the iron flowing in my veins. Its grayness turns my blood thick and cold. There is iron enough and more than enough for your great white boat. You will dig up this iron, and you will build a boat to rival Skithblathnir.

“You will be captain of it, Bitch Clemens, and your boat will sail up The River for more miles than
Sleipnir’s eight legs could cover in a day. You will go back and forth, north and south, east and west, as the Rivervalley takes you. You will go around the world many times.

“But the building of the boat and the sailing thereof will be bitter and full of grief. And after years, two generations as known on Earth, after great sufferings, and some joys, when you think you are at long last near the end of the long, long journey, then you will find me!

“Rather, I will find you! I will be waiting on a distant boat and I will kill you. And you will never get to the end of The River nor storm the gates of Valhalla!”

Sam became cold and brittle. Even when he felt the hand slacken its grip on his ankle, he did not move. He heard the death rattle and did not move or look down.

Faintly, Bloodaxe spoke again. “I wait!”

There was another rattle, more drawn out, and the hand fell away. Sam forced himself to step away, not sure that he would not break into a dozen pieces. He looked at von Richthofen and said, “Superstition! A man can’t look into the future!”

Von Richthofen said, “I don’t think so. But if things
are as you believe, Sam, mechanical, automatic, then the future is predetermined. If things are ready-made, why can’t the future open up for a minute, lights blaze in the tunnel of time, and a man see down the track?”

Sam did not answer. Von Richthofen laughed to show that he was joking and clapped Sam on the shoulder.

Sam said, “I need a drink. Badly.” Then he said, “I don’t take any stock in that superstitious rot.”

But he believed that those dying eyes had seen into the years ahead, and he was thereafter to believe.
An hour before dusk, King John’s fleet arrived. Sam Clemens sent a man out to tell John that he wanted to discuss a possible partnership. John, ever willing to talk to you before knifing you, agreed to a powwow. Sam stood on the edge of the bank while John Lackland leaned on the railing of his galley. Sam, his terror unfrozen by a dozen whiskeys, described the situation and spoke glowingly of the great boat to be built after the iron was secured.

John was a short, dark man with very broad shoulders, tawny hair, and blue eyes. He smiled frequently and spoke in an English not so heavily accented it could not be easily understood. Before coming to this area, he had lived for ten years among late-eighteenth-century Virginians. A fluent linguist, he had disburdened himself of much of the speech patterns of his twelfth-century English and Norman French.

He understood well why it would pay him to team up
with Clemens against von Radowitz. No doubt he had mental reservations about what he would do after von Radowitz was disposed of, but he came ashore to swear eternal friendship and partnership. The details of the pact were arranged over drinks, and then King John had Joe Miller released from his cage on the flagship.

Sam did not shed tears easily, but several trickled down his cheeks on seeing the titanthrop. Joe wept like a perambulating Niagara Falls and almost broke Sam’s ribs in his embrace.

Von Richthofen, however, told Clemens later, “At least, with Bloodaxe, you knew fairly well where you stood. You’ve made a bad trade.”

“I’m from Missouri,” Sam replied, “but I never was much of a mule trader. However, if you’re running for your life, a pack of wolves snapping at your heels, you’ll trade a foundered plug for a wild mustang as long as he’ll carry you out of danger. You worry later about how to get down off of him without breaking your neck.”

The battle, which started at dawn the next day, was long. Several times, disaster came close for Clemens
and King John. The Englishman’s fleet had hidden near the east bank in the early morning fog and then had come up behind the German fleet. Flaming pine torches thrown by John’s sailors started fires on many of von Radowitz’s boats. But the invaders spoke a common language, were well disciplined, had soldiered together a long time, and were far better armed.

Their rockets sank many of John’s boats and blasted holes in the cheval-de-frise along the bank. The Germans then stormed ashore under cover of a hail of arrows. During the landing, a rocket exploded in the hole dug to get to the iron. Sam was knocked over by the blast. Half stunned, he rose. And he became aware of a man he had never seen before standing by him. Sam was sure that the man had not been in this area until this moment.

The stranger was about five feet seven inches tall and was stockily, even massively, built. Like an old red ram, Sam thought, though the stranger looked, of course, as if he were twenty-five years old. His curly auburn hair hung down his back to his waist. His black eyebrows were as thick as Sam’s. His eyes were large, dark brown with chips of pale green. His face was aquiline
and jutting-chinned. His ears were large and stood out at almost right angles from his head.

The body of an old red ram, Sam thought, with the head of a great horned owl.

His bow was made of a material that Sam had seen before, though it was rare. It was made from two of the curved horns that ring a Riverdragon-fish’s mouth. The two were joined together to make one double recurved bow. This type was by far the most powerful and durable bow in the valley but had one disadvantage. It took extremely powerful arms to bend it.

The stranger’s leather quiver held twenty arrows, flint-tipped, the shafts carved laboriously from the fin bones of the Riverdragon and feathered with carved pieces of bone so thin that the sun shone through them.

He spoke in a German with a thick, non-Germanic, unidentifiable accent. “You look like Sam Clemens.”

“I am,” Clemens replied. “What’s left of me. But how did you…?”

“You were described to me by”—the stranger paused—“one of Them.”
Sam did not understand for a moment. The partial deafness caused by the explosion, the yells of men killing each other only twenty yards away, other, more distant rocket explosions, and the sudden appearance of this man gave everything an unreal quality.

He said, “He sent...the Mysterious Stranger...he sent you! You’re one of The Twelve!”

“He? Not he! She sent me!”

Sam did not have time to question him about this. He checked the impulse to ask the man if he was any good with the bow. He looked as if he could wrest from the bow the last atom of potentiality. Instead, Sam climbed to the top of the pile of dirt by the hole and pointed at the nearest enemy ship, its prow against the bank. A man standing on its poop deck was bellowing orders.

“Von Radowitz, the leader of the enemy,” Sam said. “He’s out of range of our feeble bows.”

Smoothly, swiftly, pausing only to aim briefly, not bothering to gauge the wind which blew always at this time of day at a steady six miles an hour, the bowman loosed his black arrow. Its trajectory ended in the solar plexus of von Radowitz. The German staggered
backward under the impact, whirled to reveal the bloody tip sticking from his back, and fell backward over the railing and into the waters between boat and bank.

The second-in-command rallied his men, and the bowman drove a shaft through him. Joe Miller, clad in Riverdragon-leather armor, swinging his huge oaken club, ravaged among the Germans in the center of the line of battle. He was like an 800-pound lion with a human brain. Death and panic went with him. He smashed twenty skulls by the minute and occasionally picked up a man with his free hand and threw him to knock down a half dozen or so.

At different times, five men managed to slip behind Joe, but the black bone arrows of the newcomer always intercepted them.

The invaders broke and tried to get back to their boats. Von Richthofen, naked, bloody, grinning, danced before Sam. “We’ve won! We’ve won!”

“You’ll get your flying machine yet,” Sam said. He turned to the archer. “What is your name?”

“I have had many names, but when my grandfather
first held me in his arms he called me Odysseus.”

... 

All Sam could think of to say was, “We’ve got a lot to talk about.”

Could this be the man of whom Homer sang? The real Ulysses, that is, the historical Ulysses, who did fight before the walls of Troy and about whom legends and fairy tales were later collected? Why not? The shadowy man who had talked in Sam’s hut had said he had picked twelve men out of the billions available. What his means were for choosing, Sam did not know, but he presumed his reasons were good. And the Mysterious Stranger had told him of one choice: Richard Francis Burton. Was there some kind of aura about The Twelve that enabled the renegade to know the man who could do the job? Some tiger color of the soul?

Late that night, Sam, Joe, Lothar, and the Achaean, Odysseus, walked to their huts after the victory celebration. Sam’s throat was dry from all the talking. He had tried to squeeze out of the Achaean all he knew about the siege of Troy and his wanderings afterward.
He had been told enough to confuse, not enlighten, him.

The Troy that Odysseus knew was not the city near the Hellespont, the ruins that Terrestrial archaeologists called Troy VIIa. The Troy that Odysseus, Agamemnon, and Diomedes besieged was farther south, opposite the island of Lesbos but inland and north of the Kaikos River. It had been inhabited by people related to the Etruscans, who lived at that time in Asia Minor and later emigrated to Italy because of the Hellenic invaders. Odysseus knew of the city which later generations had thought was Troy. Dardanians, barbarophones, lived there; they were related to the true Trojans. Their city had fallen five years before the Trojan war to other barbarians from the north.

Three years after the siege of the real Troy, which had lasted for only two years, Odysseus had gone on the great sea-raid of the Danaans, or Achaeans, against the Egypt of Rameses III. The raid had ended in disaster. Odysseus had fled for his life by sea and had indeed gone unwillingly on a journey that took three years and resulted in his visiting Malta, Sicily, and parts of Italy, lands unknown then to the Greeks. There had been no Laestrygonians, Aeolus, Calypso, Circe,
Polyphemus. His wife was named Penelope, but there were no suitors for him to kill.

As for Achilles and Hector, Odysseus knew of them only as the principals in a song. He supposed both of them to have been Pelasgians, the people who lived in the Hellenic peninsula before the Achaeans came down out of the north to conquer it. The Achaeans had adapted the Pelasgian song to suit their own purposes, and later bards must have incorporated it in the _Iliad_. Odysseus knew the _Iliad_ and the _Odyssey_, because he had met a scholar who could recite both epics from memory.

“What about the Wooden Horse?” Sam said, fully expecting to draw a blank with his question. To his surprise, Odysseus not only knew of it but said that he had indeed been responsible for it. It was a deception conceived in desperation by madness and should have failed.

And this, to Sam, was the most startling of all. The scholars had united in denying any reality to this story, saying that it was patently impossible. They should have
been correct, since the idea did seem fantastic, nor was it likely that the Achaeans would be stupid enough to build the horse or the Trojans stupid enough to fall for it. But the wooden horse had existed, and the Achaeans had gotten into the city by hiding inside the horse.

Von Richthofen and Joe listened to the two talk. Sam had decided that, despite the Ethical’s warning to tell no one about him, Joe and Lothar should know of him. Otherwise, Sam would be doing so many things that would be inexplicable to anyone closely associated with him. Besides, Sam felt that his taking others into the secret would show the Ethical that Sam was really running things. It was a childish gesture, but Sam made it.

Sam said good-night to all but Joe and lay down on the cot. Although very tired, he could not get to sleep. The snores issuing from Joe like a maelstrom through a keyhole did not help soothe his insomnia. Also, his excitement over tomorrow’s doings made his nerves ripple and brain pulse. Tomorrow would be a historic day, if this world were to have a history. Eventually, there would be paper, ink, pencils, even a printing press. The great Riverboat would have a weekly
journal. There would be a book which would tell of how the hole was deepened by exploding rockets captured from von Radowitz’s ship. Perhaps the iron would be exposed tomorrow; it surely must.

And there were in addition his worries about King John, the jesting slyboots. God knew what that insidious mind was planning. It was doubtful that John would do anything treacherous until the boat was built, and that would be years from now. There was no need to worry yet, none at all. Despite which, Sam worried.
Sam awoke with a start, his heart beating as if some monster of his nightmares had kicked it. Wet air was blowing in through the interstices of the bamboo walls and the mat hanging over the entranceway. Rain crashed against the leaf-covered roof, and thunder boomed from the mountains. Joe was still snoring his private thunder.

Sam stretched, and then he cried out and sat up. His hand had touched flesh. Lightning from far away paled the darkness by two shades and gave vague shape to someone squatting by the cot.

A familiar baritone spoke. "You needn't look for the titanthrop to come to your aid. I've ensured that he'll not wake until dawn."

By this, Sam knew that the Ethical could see where no light was. Sam picked up a cigar from the little folding table and said, "Mind if I smoke?"

The Mysterious Stranger took so long replying that
Sam wondered. The glow from the hot wire in Sam's lighter would not be bright enough to reveal the man's features, and probably he was wearing a mask or some device over his face. Did he dislike the odor of cigars, perhaps of tobacco in any form? Yet he hesitated to say so because this characteristic might identify him? Identify whom? The other Ethicals who knew that they had a renegade among them? There were twelve, or so the Stranger had said. If they ever learned that he, Sam Clemens, had been contacted by an Ethical, and learned of the Ethical's dislike of tobacco, would They know at once the renegade's identity?

Sam did not voice his suspicions. He would keep this to himself for possible later use.

"Smoke," the Stranger said. Although Sam could not see him or hear him move, he got the impression that he backed off a little.

"What's the occasion for this unexpected visit?" Sam said.

"To tell you I won't be able to see you for a long time. I didn't want you to think I'd deserted you. I'm being called away on business you wouldn't understand"
even if I were to explain it. You’re on your own now for a long time. If things should go badly for you, I won’t be able to interfere even in a subtle way.

“However, you have all you need at present to occupy you for a decade. You’ll have to use your own ingenuity to solve the many technical problems that will arise. I can’t supply you with any more metals or materials you might need or extricate you from difficulties with invaders. I took enough chances in getting the meteorite down to you and in telling you where the bauxite and platinum are.

“There will be other Ethicals—not The Twelve, but second-order—to watch you, but they won’t interfere. They won’t think the boat any danger to The Plan. They’d rather you didn’t have the iron and they’ll be upset when you ‘discover’ the platinum and bauxite. They want you Terrestrials to be occupied with psychic development, not technological. But they won’t stick their noses in.”

Sam felt a little panic. For the first time, he realized that, though he hated the Ethical, he had come to depend strongly on him for moral and material support.
"I hope nothing goes wrong," Sam said. "I almost lost my chance at the iron today. If it hadn’t been for Joe and that fellow, Odysseus...."

Then he said, "Hold it! Odysseus told me that the Ethical who talked to him was a woman!"

The darkness chuckled. "What does that mean?"

"Either you’re not the only renegade or else you can change your voice. Or maybe, maybe you’re not telling me the truth at all! Maybe you’re all in on this and feeding out fine lies for some plan of your own! We’re tools in your hands!"

"I’m not lying! And I can’t tell you about your other guesses. If you, or the others I’ve chosen, are detected and questioned, their stories will confuse my colleagues."

There was a rustle. "I must go now. You’re on your own. Good luck."

"Wait! What if I fail?"

"Somebody else will build the boat, but I have good reasons for wanting you to do it."

"So I am just a tool. If the tools breaks, throw it
away, get another.”

“I can’t assure your success. I’m not a god.”

“Damn you and all your kind!” Sam shouted. “Why couldn’t you have let things be as they were on Earth? We had the peace of death forever. No more pain and grief. No more never-ceasing toil and heartache. All that was behind us. We were free, free of the chains of flesh. But you gave us the chains again and fixed it so we couldn’t even kill ourselves. You set death beyond our reach. It’s as if you put us in hell forever!”

“It’s not that bad,” the Ethical said. “Most of you are better off than you ever were. Or at least as well off. The crippled, the blind, the grotesque, the diseased, the starved are healthy and young. You don’t have to sweat for or worry about your daily bread, and most of you are eating much better than you did on Earth. However, I agree with you in the larger sense. It was a crime, the greatest crime of all, to resurrect you. So….”

“I want my Livy back!” Sam cried. “And I want my daughters! They might as well be dead as separated from me, I mean from each other, forever! I’d rather they were dead! At least I wouldn’t be in agony all the
time because they might be suffering, be in some terrible plight! How do I know they’re not being raped, beaten, tortured? There’s so much evil on this planet! There should be, since it has the original population of Earth!”

“I could help you,” the Ethical said. “But it might take years for me to locate them. I won’t explain the means because they’re too complicated and I have to leave before the rain is over.”

Sam rose and walked forward, his hands out.

The Ethical said, “Stop! You touched me once!”

Sam halted. “Could you find Livy for me? My girls?”

“I’ll do it. You have my word. Only…only what if it does take years? Suppose you have built the boat by then—in fact, are already a million miles up The River. And then I tell you I’ve found your wife, but she’s three million miles down River? I can notify you of her location, but I positively cannot bring her to you. You’ll have to get her yourself. What will you do then? Will you turn back and spend twenty years backtracking? Would your crew permit you to do so? I doubt it. Moreover, even if you did this, there’s no certainty that your woman would still be in the original location. She
may have been killed and translated elsewhere, even farther out of reach."

"Damn you!" Sam said.

"And, of course," the Ethical said, "people change. You may not like her when you find her."

"I'll kill you!" Sam Clemens yelled. "So help me...!"

The bamboo mat was lifted. The Stranger was silhouetted briefly, a batlike, cloaked shape with a dome covering for the head. Sam clenched his fists and forced himself to stand like a block of ice, waiting for his anger to melt away. Then he began pacing back and forth until finally he threw his cigar away. It had turned bitter; even the air he breathed was harsh.

"Damn them! Damn him! I'll build the boat and I'll get to the north pole and I'll find out what's going on! And I'll kill him! Kill them!"

The rains stopped. There were shouts from a distance. Sam went outside, alarmed because the Stranger might have been caught, although it did not seem likely. And he knew then that his boat meant more
than anything else, that he did not want anything to happen to interfere with its building, even if he could take immediate revenge on the Ethical. That would have to come later.

Torches were coming across the plain. Presently, the bearers were close enough for Sam to make out the faces of some guards and that of von Richthofen. There were three unknowns with them.

An arrangement of large towels, held together by magnetic clasps, fell shapelessly about their bodies. A hood shadowed the face of the smallest stranger. The tallest was a man with a long, lean, dark face and a huge hooked nose.

“You’re runner-up in the contest,” Sam said. “There’s someone in my hut who has a nose that beats yours all hollow.”

“Nom d’un con! Va te faire foutre!” the tall man said. “Must I always be insulted, no matter where I go? Is this the hospitality you give strangers? Did I travel ten thousand leagues under incredibly harsh conditions to find the man who can put good steel in my hand once more, only to have him verbally tweak my nose? Know,
ignorant insolent lout, that Savinien Cyrano II de Bergerac does not turn the other cheek. Unless you apologize, immediately, most sincerely, plead with the tongue of an angel, I will stab you through with this nose that you so mock!”

Sam apologized abjectly, saying that his nerves had been frayed by the battle. He looked in wonder at the legendary figure and he wondered if he could be one of the chosen twelve.

The second man, slim, blond-haired, and blue-eyed, introduced himself as Hermann Göring. A spiral bone, taken from one of the Riverfishes, hung from a cord around his neck, and by this Sam knew that he was a member of the Church of the Second Chance. This meant trouble, because the Second Chancers preached absolute pacifism.

The third stranger threw the hood back and revealed a pretty face with long black hair done in a Psyche knot.

Sam staggered and almost fainted. “Livy!”
The woman started. She stepped closer to him and silently, pale in the torchlight, looked at him. She was weaving back and forth, as if she were about to faint.

“Sam,” she said weakly.

He took a step toward her, but she turned and clung to de Bergerac for support. The Frenchman put his arm around her and glared at Sam Clemens. “Courage, my little lamb! He will not harm you while I am here! What does he mean to you?”

She looked up at him with an expression that Sam could not mistake. He howled and shook his fist at the stars, just coming out from the clouds.
The Riverboat moved through his dream like a glittering twenty-million-carat diamond.

There had never been a boat like it nor would there ever be another.

It would be named the Not For Hire. No one would ever be able to take it away from him, it would be so strongly armored and weaponed. Nor would anyone be able to buy or rent it from him.

The name glowed in great black letters against the white hull. NOT FOR HIRE.

The fabulous Riverboat would have four decks: the boiler deck, the main deck, the hurricane deck, and the landing deck for the aerial machine. Its overall length would be four hundred and forty feet and six inches. The beam over the paddle-wheel guards would be ninety-three feet. Mean draft, loaded, twelve feet. The hull would be made of magnalium or, perhaps, plastic. The great stacks would spout smoke now and then,
because there was a steam boiler aboard. But this was only to propel the big plastic bullets for the steam machine guns. The giant paddle wheels on the sides of the Riverboat would be turned by enormous electrical motors.

The Not For Hire would be the only metal boat on The River, the only boat not propelled by oars or wind, and it would make anybody sit up and stare, whether he was born in 2,000,000 B.C. or in A.D. 2000.

And he, Sam Clemens, would be The Captain, capital T, capital C, because, aboard this vessel, carrying a crew of one hundred and twenty, there would be only one Captain.

King John of England could call himself Admiral if he wished, though if Sam Clemens had anything to do with it, he’d be First Mate, not Admiral. And if Sam Clemens really had anything to do with it, King John—John Lackland, Rotten John, Dirty John, Lecher John, Pigsty John—would not even be allowed on the boat. Sam Clemens, smoking a big green cigar, wearing a white cap, dressed in a white kilt with a white towel over his shoulders for a cape, would lean out of the
starboard port of the great pilothouse and yell, *Avast there, you lubbers!* Grab hold of that putrescent mass of immorality and treachery and toss him off the gangplank! I don’t care if he lands in The River or on the bank! Get rid of that human garbage!

Over the railing of the boiler deck Prince John would sail. Slyboots John, screaming, cursing in his French-accented Middle English or in Anglo-Norman French or in Esperanto. Then the gangplank would be drawn up, bells would ring, whistles would blow, and Sam Clemens, standing behind the pilot, would give the order to begin the voyage.

The voyage! Up The River for maybe ten million miles or maybe twenty million miles, for maybe forty years or a hundred years. Such a Riverboat, such a River, such a voyage had never been dreamed of on Earth, long dead Earth! Up The River, the only one on this world, on the only boat like this, with Sam Clemens as *La Sipestro*, The Captain, and also addressed as *La Estro*, The Boss.

He was so happy!

And then, as they headed out toward the middle of
The River, just to test the current, which was strongest in the center of the mighty stream, as the thousands along the bank waved and cheered or wept after the boat, after him, Samuel Langhorne Clemens, Alias Mark Twain—The Captain, The Boss—he saw a man with long yellow hair and broad shoulders pushing through the crowd.

The man wore a towelling cloth, secured by magnetic tabs under the material, as a kilt. His leather sandals were made of the hide of the whale-sized Riverdragon fish. Around his thickly muscled neck he wore a string of brilliantly colored hornfish vertebrae. In his huge powerful hand he gripped the wooden shaft of a large war ax of iron. His pale-blue eyes were fixed on Samuel Clemens and that broad hawk-nosed face was grim.

Sam Clemens screamed to the pilot, *Faster! Faster! Full speed ahead!*

The great paddle-wheels began to dip into the water more swiftly—*chunk—chunk*. Even through the fiberglass-insulated deck the vibrations made the deck
quiver. Suddenly the blond man, Erik Bloodaxe, tenth-century Viking King, was in the pilothouse.

He shouted at Sam Clemens in Old Norse. *Traitor! Droppings of Ratatosk! I told you I would wait along the banks of The River! You betrayed me so you could get the iron from the fallen star to build your great Riverboat!*

Sam fled the pilothouse and down the ladders from deck to deck and down into the dark bowels of the hold, but Erik Bloodaxe was always two steps behind.

Past the colossal rotating electric motors Sam Clemens ran, and then he was in the chemistry room, where the engineers were making potassium nitrate from human excrement and mixing it with sulfur and charcoal to make gunpowder. Sam grabbed hold of a lighter and a resin torch, pressed the slide, and a white-hot glowing wire slid out of the case.

*Stop, or I’ll blow up the whole boat!* Sam screamed.

Erik had stopped, but he was swinging the big ax around and around over his head. He grinned and said, *Go ahead! You haven’t got the guts! You love the*
Riverboat more than you love anything, even your faithless but precious Livy! You wouldn’t blow her up! So I’m going to split you down the middle with my ax and then take the Riverboat for myself!

No! No! Sam screamed. You wouldn’t dare! You can’t! You can’t! This is my dream, my love, my passion, my life, my world! You can’t!

The Norseman stepped closer to him; the ax whistled over his head.

I can’t! Just stand there and see!

Over his shoulder Sam saw a shadow. It moved forward and became a tall, faceless figure. It was X, the Mysterious Stranger, the renegade Ethical who had sent the meteorite crashing into the Rivervalley so that Sam could have the iron and nickel to build his Riverboat on this mineral-poor planet. And so he could sail up The River to the North Polar Sea where the Misty Tower, the Big Grail, call it what you would, was hidden in the cold fog. And there Sam, with the eleven men chosen by X for his as-yet-unrevealed plan, would storm the Tower and find—find what? Whatever was there.

Stranger! Sam called. Save me! Save me!
The laughter was like a wind from the polar sea, turning his guts to crystal.

Save yourself, Sam!

No! No! You promised! Sam yelled. And then his eyes were open and the last of his groans died away. Or had he dreamed that he was groaning?

...
with a thin white cloth.

On the table was his grail, a gray metallic cylinder with a metal handle.

On the desk were glass bottles containing a soot-black ink, a number of bone pens, and one nickel-iron pen. The papers on the desk were of bamboo, though there were a few sheets of vellum from the inner lining of the stomach of the hornfish.

Glass windows (or ports, as he called them) looked out all around the room. As far as Sam Clemens knew, this was the only house with glass windows in the entire Rivervalley. Certainly, it was the only one for ten thousand miles either way from this area.

The sole light came from the sky. Though it was not yet dawn, the light was a trifle brighter than that cast by the full moon on Earth. Giant stars of many colors, some so big they looked like chipped-off pieces of the moon, jam-packed the heavens. Bright sheets and streamers hung between the stars, behind them, and even, seemingly, in front of some of the brightest. These were cosmic gas clouds, glories that never ceased to thrill the more sensitive of humanity along The River.
Sam Clemens, smacking his lips at the sour taste of the liquor he had drunk that evening and the even sourer taste of the dream, stumbled across the floor. He opened his eyes completely when he reached the desk, picked up a lighter, and applied the extended hot wire to a fish-oil lamp in a stone bracket.

He opened a port and looked out toward The River. A year ago he would have seen only a flat plain about a mile and a half wide and covered with short, tough, bright-green grass. Now it was a hideous mass of piled-up earth, deep pits, and many buildings of bamboo and pine containing brick furnaces. These were his steel mills (so-called), his glass factory, his smelters, his cement mills, his forges, his blacksmith shops, his armories, his laboratories, and his nitric- and sulfuric-acid factories. A half a mile away was a high wall of pine logs enclosing the first metal boat he would build.

Torches flared to his left. Even at night the men were digging out the siderite chunks, hauling up pieces of the nickel-iron.

Behind him had been a forest of thousand-foot-high irontrees, red pine, lodgepole pine, black oak, white
oak, yew trees, and thick stands of bamboo. These had stood on the foothills; the hills were mostly still there but the trees, except for the iron trees, were all gone, along with the bamboo. Only the huge iron trees had withstood the steel axes of Clemens’ people. The tall grasses had been cut down and their fibers chemically treated to make ropes and paper, but their roots were so tough and so tangled that there had not been enough reason to chop them out. The labor and materials used in chopping through the roots of the short grass of the plains to get to the metal there had been very expensive. Not in terms of money, because that did not exist, but in terms of sweat, worn-out stone, and dulled steel.

Where this area had been beautiful with its many trees and bright grass and the colored blooms of the vines that covered the trees, it was now like a battlefield. It had been necessary to create ugliness to build a beautiful boat.

Sam shivered at the wet and chilly wind which always came late at night from up River. He shivered also at the thought of the desolation. He loved beauty and nature’s order and he loved the parklike arrangement of the valley, whatever else he thought
about this world. Now he had made it hideous because he had a dream. And he would have to extend that hideousness, because his mills and factories needed more wood for fuel, for paper, for charcoal. All that his state possessed was used up and he had about used up all that Černskujo to the immediate north and Publiujo to the immediate south would trade him. If he wanted more he would have to war on his closest neighbors or make arrangements for trading with the more distant states or those just across The River. Or else conquer them and take their wood away from them. He did not want to do that; he abhorred war in principle and could barely stand it in practice.

But if he was to have his Riverboat he had to have wood as fuel for his factories.

He also had to have bauxite and cryolite and platinum if he was to have aluminum generators and motors.

The nearest source of all three was in Soul City, that nation twenty-six miles downRiver dominated by Elwood Hacking, who hated whites.

So far, Sam had been able to trade iron weapons for
bauxite, cryolite, cinnabar, and platinum. Sam’s own state, Parolando, needed the weapons badly. Adding one burden to the other, Hacking insisted that Parolando use its own men to mine and transport the ore.

Sam sighed deeply. Why in hell hadn’t the Mysterious Stranger directed the meteorite to fall right by the bauxite deposits? Then, when Sam and Bloodaxe’s Vikings had sailed into this area immediately after the meteorite had struck, they could have claimed the land that was now Soul City for their own. When Hacking arrived, he would have been forced to join Clemens or to leave.

Still, even with the Stranger’s powers, it would not be easy to deflect a hundred-thousand-ton iron-nickel siderite from its course and make it fall only twenty-six miles from the bauxite and other minerals. Actually the Stranger had supposed that he had hit the target on the bull’s eye. He had told Sam, before he disappeared on some unknown mission, that the minerals were upRiver, all within a seven-mile range. But he had been mistaken. And that had made Sam both glad and angry. He was angry because the minerals were not all within his reach,
but he was also happy that the Ethicals could make a mistake.

That fact did not help the humans imprisoned forever between sheer mountains 20,000 feet high in a valley about 9.9 miles wide on the average. They would be imprisoned for thousands of years, if not forever, unless Samuel Langhorne Clemens could build his Riverboat.

SAM went to the unpainted pine cabinet, opened a door, and pulled out an opaque glass bottle. It held about twenty ounces of bourbon donated by people who did not drink. He downed about three ounces, winced, snorted, slapped his chest, and put the bottle back. Hah! Nothing better to start off the day with, especially when you woke up from a nightmare that should have been rejected by the Great Censor of Dreams. If, that is, the Great Censor had any love and regard for one of his favorite dream-makers, Sam Clemens. Maybe the Great Censor did not love him after all. It seemed that very few did love Sam anymore. He had to do things he did not want to do in order to get the boat built.

And then there was Livy, his wife on Earth for thirty-
four years.

He swore, caressed a nonexistent mustache, reached back into the cabinet, and pulled the bottle out again. Another snort. Tears came, but whether engendered by the bourbon or the thought of Livy, he did not know. Probably, in this world of complex forces and mysterious operations—and operators—the tears were caused by both. Plus other things which his hindbrain did not care to let him peep into at this moment. His hindbrain would wait until his forebrain was bent over, tying its intellectual shoestrings, and would then boost the posterior of said forebrain.

He strode across the bamboo mats and looked through the port window. Down there, about two hundred yards away, under the branches of the iron tree, was a round, conical-roofed, two-room hut. Inside the bedroom would be Olivia Langdon Clemens, his wife—his ex-wife—and the long, lanky, tremendously beaked, weak-chinned Savinien Cyrano II de Bergerac, swordsman, libertine, and man of letters.

“Livy, how could you?” Sam said. “How could you break my heart, the heart of Your Youth?”
A year had passed since she had arrived with Cyrano de Bergerac. He had been shocked, more shocked than he had ever been in his seventy-four years on Earth and his twenty-one years on the Riverworld. But he had recovered from it. Or he would have recovered if he had not gotten another shock, though a lesser one. Nothing could exceed the impact of the first. After all, he could not expect Livy to go without a man for twenty-one years. Not when she was young and beautiful again and still passionate and had no reasonable hope of ever seeing him again. He had lived with a half dozen women himself, and he could not expect chastity or faithfulness from her. But he had expected that she would drop her mate as a monkey drops a heated penny when she found him again.

Not so. She loved de Bergerac.

He had seen her almost every day since the night she had first come out of the mists of The River. They spoke politely enough and sometimes they were able to crack their reserve and laugh and joke just as they had on Earth. Sometimes, briefly but undeniably, their eyes told each other that the old love was vibrating between them. Then, when he felt that he had broken out with
longing, just like the hives, so he told himself later, laughing while he felt like crying, he had stepped toward her, despite himself, and she had stepped back to Cyrano’s side if he happened to be there or looked around for him if he wasn’t.

Every night she was with that dirty, uncouth, big-nosed, weak-chinned, Adam’s-appled, but colorful, strong-minded, witty, vigorous, talented, scary Frenchman. The virile frog, Sam muttered. He could imagine him leaping, croaking with lust, toward the white, blackly outlined, curving figure of Livy, leaping, croaking…

He shuddered. This was no good. Even when he brought women up here secretly—though he did not have to hide anything—he could not quite forget her. Even when he chewed dreamgum he could not forget her. If anything, she sailed into the drug-tossed sea of his mind more strongly, blown by the winds of desire. The good ship Livy, white sails bellying out, the trim clean cut curving hull…

And he heard her laughter, that lovely laughter. That was the hardest thing to endure.
He walked away and looked out through the foreports. He stood by the oak pedestal and the big-spoked Riverboat’s wheel he had carved. This room was his “pilothouse” and the two rooms behind made up the “texas.” The whole building was on the side of the hill nearest to the plain. It was on thirty-foot stilts and could be entered through a staircase or ladder (to use a nautical term) on the starboard side or through a port directly from the hill behind the rear chamber of the texas. On top of the pilothouse was a large bell, the only metal bell in the world, as far as he knew. As soon as the water clock in the corner struck six, he would clang the big bell. And the dark valley would slowly come to life.
Mists still overhung The River and the edge of the banks, but he could see the huge squat mushroom shape of the grailstone a mile and a half down the slope of the plain just by the water’s edge. A moment later, he saw a boat, toy-size, emerge from the mists. Two figures jumped out and pulled the dugout onto the shore, then ran off to the right. The light from the skies was bright enough for Sam to see them, though he sometimes lost them when buildings intervened. After going around the two-story pottery factory, they cut straight into the hills. He lost them then, but it seemed that they were heading for John Plantagenet’s log “palace.”

So much for the sentinel system of Parolando. Every quarter mile of The River’s front was guarded by a hut on thirty-foot stilts with four men on duty. If they saw anything suspicious, they were to beat on their drums, blow their bone horns, and light their torches.
Two men slipping out of the fog to carry news to King John, ex–King John, of England?

Fifteen minutes later Sam saw a shadow running between shadows. The rope attached to the small bell just inside the entrance rang. He looked through the starboard port. A white face looked up at him. Sam’s own spy, William Grevel, famous wool merchant, citizen of London, died in 1401 in the Year of Our Lord. There were no sheep or, in fact, any mammals other than man along The River. But the ex-merchant had shown great aptitude for espionage, and he loved to stay up all night and skulk around.

Sam beckoned to him; Grevel ran up the “ladder” and entered after Sam had unbarred the thick oak door.

Sam said, in Esperanto, “Saluton, leutenanto Grevel. Kio estas?”

(Translation: “Hello, Lieutenant Grevel. What’s the matter?”)

Grevel said, “Bonan matenon, Estro. Ĉiu grasa fripono, Reĝo Johano, estas jüs akceptita duo spionoj.”

(Translation: “Good morning, Boss. That fat rascal,
King John, has just received two spies.

Neither Sam nor Grevel could understand each other's English, but they got along very well in Esperanto, except now and then.

Sam grinned. Bill Grevel had let himself down from the limb of an irontree, passing directly over a sentry, and down a rope onto the edge of the roof of the two-story building. He had passed through the bedroom, where three women slept, and then crawled to the top of the staircase. John and his spies, a twentieth-century Italian and a sixth-century Hungarian, were at a table below Grevel. The two had reported the results of their trip up River. John was furious and justly so, from his viewpoint.

Sam, hearing Grevel's report, also became furious.

"He tried to assassinate Arthur of New Brittany? What is that man trying to do, ruin all of us?"

He paced back and forth, stopped, lit a big cigar, and began pacing again. Once he stopped to invite Grevel to a bite of cheese and a glass of wine.

It was one of the ironies of Chance or, perhaps, of the Ethicals, for who knew what things they arranged,
that King John of England and the nephew he had murdered most fouly should have been located within thirty-two miles of each other. Arthur, Prince of Brittany of dead Earth, had organized the peoples among whom he found himself into a state he called New Brittany. There were very few old Bretons in the ten-mile-long territory he ruled, but that did not matter. New Brittany it was.

It had taken eight months before Arthur had discovered that his uncle was his neighbor. He had traveled incognito to Parolando to verify with his own eyes the identity of the uncle who had slit his throat and dropped his weighted body into the Seine. Arthur wanted to capture John and keep him alive for as long as possible under exquisite torture. Killing John would only bar him, possibly forever, from getting his revenge. John, murdered, would awake the next day someplace thousands of miles away on The River.

But Arthur had sent emissaries demanding that John be given up to him. These demands had been rejected, of course, though only Sam’s sense of honor and his fear of John kept him from agreeing to Arthur’s demands.
Now John had sent four men to assassinate Arthur. Two had been killed; the others had escaped with minor wounds. This would mean invasion. Arthur not only had wanted revenge on John, he would like to get possession of the meteorite iron.

**BETWEEN** Parolando and New Brittany, a fourteen-mile stretch of the right bank of The River was known as Chernsky’s Land, or in Esperanto, Ĉernskujo. Chernsky, a sixteenth-century Ukrainian cavalry colonel, had refused an alliance with Arthur. But the nation immediately to New Brittany’s north was governed by Iyeyasu. He was a powerful and ambitious person, the man who had established the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1600 with its capital at Yedo, later called Tokyo. Sam’s spies said that the Japanese and the Breton had met six times in a war conference.

Moreover, just to the north of Iyeyasujo was Kleomenujo. This was governed by Kleomenes, a king of Sparta and half-brother to that Leonidas who held the pass at Thermopylae. Kleomenes had met three times with Iyeyasu and Arthur.
Just south of Parolando was an eleven-mile stretch called Publia, after its king, Publius Crassus. Publius had been an officer in Caesar’s cavalry during the Gallic campaigns. He was inclined to be friendly, although he extracted a big price for letting Sam cut down his timber.

South of Publia was Tofonujo, ruled by Tai Fung, one of Kublai Khan’s captains, killed on Earth when he fell drunk off a horse.

And south of Tifonujo was Soul City, headed by Elwood Hacking and Milton Firebrass.

Sam stopped and glared from under bushy brows at Grevel. “The hell of it, Bill, is there isn’t much I can do. If I tell John I know about his trying to murder Arthur, who may deserve murder, for all I know, then John knows that I’ve got spies inside the house. And he’ll just deny everything, ask that I bring his accusers forth—and you know what would happen to them, to you.”

Grevel paled.

Sam said, “Start your blood running again, I won’t do it. No. The only thing to do is to keep quiet and watch for developments. But I’m choking up to here
with keeping quiet. That man is the most despicable I ever met—and if you knew my vast range of acquaintances, including publishers, you would feel the depth of my words.”

“John could be a tax collector,” Grevel said, as if he had plumbed the depths of insult. And he had, for him.

“It was a bad day when I had to agree to take John on as a partner,” Sam muttered, blowing out smoke as he turned toward Grevel. “But if I hadn’t taken him in, I’d have been robbed of my chance at the iron.”

He dismissed Grevel after thanking him. The skies just above the mountains across The River were red. Soon the entire vault would be rosy on the edges and blue above, but it would be some time before the sun cleared the mountain. Before then, the grailstones would be discharging.

He washed his face in a basin, combed his thick bush of reddish hair straight back, applied the toothpaste with the tip of his finger to his teeth and gums, and spat. Then he fastened a belt with four sheaths and a bag dangling from a strap, and put it around his waist. He
placed a long towel around his shoulders as a cape, picked up a cane of oak shod with iron, and, with the other hand, picked up the grail. He went down the stairs. The grass was still wet. It rained every night at three o’clock for half an hour, and the valley did not dry until after the sun came up. If it were not for the absence of disease germs and viruses, half the valley’s humans would have died of pneumonia and flu long ago.

Sam was young and vigorous again, but he still did not like to exercise. As he walked, he thought of the little railway he would like to build from his house to the edge of The River. But that would be too restrictive. Why not build an automobile with a motor that burned wood alcohol?

People began joining him; he was kept busy with “Saluton!” and “Bonan matenon!” At the end of his walk, he gave his grail to a man to put on a depression on the top of the gray granite mushroom-shaped rock. About six hundred of the gray cylinders were placed in the depression, and the crowd retreated to a respectful distance. Fifteen minutes later, the rock erupted with a roar. Blue flames soared twenty-five feet high and thunder echoed from the mountain. The appointed grail
keepers for the day got onto the rock and passed the cylinders around. Sam took his back to the pilothouse, wondering on the way why he did not delegate someone to carry his grail down for him. The truth was, a man was so dependent on the grail, he just could not trust it out of his sight.

Back in the house, he opened the lid. In six containers in snapdown racks were breakfast and various goodies.

The grail had a false bottom in which was concealed an energy-matter converter and programmed menus. This morning he got bacon and eggs, toast with butter and jam, a glass of milk, a slice of cantaloupe, ten cigarettes, a marijuana stick, a cube of dreamgum, a cigar, and a cup of some delicious liqueur.

He settled down to eat with gusto and got, instead, a bad taste. Looking out through the starboard port (so he wouldn’t see into Cyrano’s door), he saw a youth on his knees before his hut. The fellow was praying, his eyes closed, his hands church-steepled. He wore only a kilt and a spiral bone from a Riverfish suspended by a leather string around his neck. His hair was dark blond,
his face was broad, and his body was muscular. But his ribs were beginning to show.

The praying man was Hermann Göring.

Sam swore and reared up from his chair, knocking it backward, picked it up, and moved his breakfast from his desk to the big round table in the center of the room. The fellow had spoiled his appetite more than once. If there was one thing Sam could not stand, it was an ex-sinner, and Hermann Göring had sinned more than most and was now, by way of compensation, holier than most. Or so it seemed to Sam, though Göring claimed that he was the lowliest of the low—in a sense.

*Take your damned arrogant humility away,* Sam had said. *Or at least take it downwind...*

If it had not been for the Magna Carta which Sam had drawn up (over King John’s protests, thus repeating history), Sam would have kicked Göring and his followers out long ago. Well, at least a week ago. But the Carta, the constitution of the state of Parolando, the most democratic constitution in the history of mankind, gave total religious freedom and total freedom of speech. Almost total, anyway. There had to be some
But his own document forbade Sam to stop the missionaries of the Church of the Second Chance from preaching.

Yet if Göring continued to protest, to make speeches, to convert more to his doctrine of pacifist resistance, Sam Clemens would never get his Riverboat. Hermann Göring had made a symbol of the boat; he said that it represented man’s vanity, greed, lust for violence, and disregard of the Creator’s designs for the world of man.

Man should not build Riverboats. He should build more stately mansions of the soul. All man needed now was a roof over his head to keep off the rain and thin walls for a little privacy now and then. Man no longer had to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. His food and drink were given to him with nothing expected in return, not even gratitude. Man had time to determine his destiny. But man must not transgress on others, not rob them of their possessions, their love, or their dignity. He must respect others and himself. But he could not do this through thievery, robbery, violence, contempt.
Sam turned away. Göring had some fine sentiments to which Sam subscribed. But Göring was wrong if he thought that licking the boots of the people who had put them here was going to lead to any Utopia or salvation for their souls. Humanity had been tricked again; it was being used, misused, and abused. Everything, the resurrection, the rejuvenation, freedom from disease, free food and liquor and smokes, freedom from hard work or economic necessity, everything was an illusion, a candy bar to lead baby-mankind into some dark alley where...Where? Sam did not know. But the Mysterious Stranger had said that mankind was being tricked in the cruelest hoax of all, even crueler than the first hoax, that of life on Earth. Man had been resurrected and put on this planet as the subject of a tremendous scholarly study. That was all. And when the studies were completed, Man would go down into darkness and oblivion once more. Cheated again.

But what did the Stranger have to gain by telling this to certain selected men? Why had he chosen a small
number to help him defeat his fellow Ethicals? What was the Stranger really after? Was he lying to Sam and Cyrano and Odysseus and the others whom Sam had not yet met?

Sam Clemens did not know. He was as much in The Great Dark as he had been on Earth. But he did know one thing for certain. He wanted that Riverboat.

The mists had cleared away; breakfast time was over. He checked the water clock and rang the big bell on the pilothouse. As soon as it had ceased tolling, the wooden whistles of the sergeants began shrilling. Up and down the ten-mile stretch of the Rivervalley known as Parolando the whistles shrilled. Then the drums began to beat, and Parolando went to work.
There were seventeen thousand people in Parolando, but the Riverboat would be taking only one hundred and twenty. Twenty of these already knew for sure they would be going. Sam and Joe Miller, Lothar von Richthofen, van Boom, de Bergerac, Odysseus, three engineers, King John, and their hutmates had been promised. The rest would know whether or not they had worked for nothing a few days before the boat sailed. At that time, the names would be written on slips of paper and placed inside a big wire cage. The cage would be whirled around and around, and then Sam would stop it, and, blindfolded, would reach in and pull out, one after the other, one hundred names. And these lucky ones would be the crew of the Not For Hire.

The Not For Hire had about five million miles to travel, if the Stranger could be believed. Averaging about 335 miles every twenty-four hours, it would take over forty-one years to reach the end of The River. But it would not average that much, of course. The crew
would have to put into shore for extensive vacations on land and repairs would have to be made. In fact, the Riverboat might wear out, although Sam planned on taking many spare parts. Once the boat was on its way it could not put back for parts or pick them up anywhere else. There would be no metal of any consequence from this place on.

It was strange to think that he would be about one hundred and forty years old when he got to the headwaters of The River.

But what was that when he had thousands of years of youth to go?

He looked through the bow ports. The plain was full of people streaming down from the hills to the factories. Behind him the hills would be alive with others on their way to the factories in the hills. A small army would be working on the big dam to the northwest, near the base of the mountains. A concrete wall was being constructed between two steep hills to dam up the water flowing from a spring near the top of the mountain. When the lake behind the dam was full, its overflow would drive the electrical generators to power
the mills.

At present, the electrical energy needed came from a grailstone. A giant step-down transformer of aluminum took the energy three times a day, sent it through Brobdingnagian aluminum wires to a two-story device known as the batacitor. This was a late-twentieth-century electronic discovery that could accept hundreds of kilovolts in a hundredth of a microsecond and could discharge it at any rate from a tenth of a volt to one hundred kilovolts. It was the prototype of the batacitor that would be put on the Riverboat. At present the energy was chiefly used in a cutting device made by van Boom that sliced through the pieces of nickel-iron dug up on the plain. The energy could also be moderated to melt the metal. The aluminum for the wires and the batacitor had been laboriously and expensively made from aluminum silicate derived from the clay under the grass along the base of the mountains. But that supply had run out and now the only economically feasible source was in Soul City.

Sam sat down at his desk, pulled out a drawer, and removed a tall book bound in fish-bladder leather and with pages of bamboo-fiber paper. It was his diary,
The Memoirs of a Lazarus. For the time being he was using ink made of water and tannic acid from oak bark and of carbon from finely ground charcoal-in-suspension to write down day-by-day happenings and his reflections. When the technology of Parolando was improved enough, he would use the electronic recorder that van Boom had promised him.

He had no sooner started writing than the drums began beating. The big bass drums represented dashes; the small soprano drums, dots. The code was Morse; the language, Esperanto.

Von Richthofen would be landing in a few minutes.

Sam stood up to look out again. A half a mile away was the bamboo catamaran on which Lothar von Richthofen had sailed down River only ten days ago. Through the starboard ports Sam saw a squat figure with tawny hair coming out of the gateway of King John’s log palace. Behind him came bodyguards and sycophants.

King John was making sure that von Richthofen did not give Sam Clemens any secret messages from Elwood Hacking.
The ex-monarch of England, present coruler of Parolando, wore a kilt with red and black checks, a poncholike arrangement of towels, and knee-length, red-leather Riverdragon boots. Around his thick waist was a wide belt with a number of sheaths containing steel daggers, a short sword, and a steel ax. One hand held a steel rod coronet, one of many sources of contention between Sam and King John. Sam did not want to waste metal on such useless anachronisms, but John had insisted and Sam had given in.

Sam found some satisfaction now in thinking about the name of his little nation. Parolando in Esperanto meant *pair land* and was so called because two men governed it. But Sam had not mentioned to John that another translation could be *Twain Land*.

John followed a hard-dirt path around a long, low factory building, and then he was at the foot of the staircase of Sam’s quarters. His bodyguard, a big thug named Sharkey, pulled the bell rope and the little bell tinkled.

Sam stuck his head out and shouted, “Come aboard, John!”
John looked up at him from pale blue eyes and motioned to Sharkey to precede him. John was cautious about assassins, and he had reason to be. He was also resentful about having to come to Sam, but he had known that von Richthofen would report to Sam first.

Sharkey entered, inspected Sam’s pilothouse, and looked through the three rooms of the texas. Sam heard a growl, as low and powerful as a lion’s, from the rear bedroom. Sharkey came back swiftly and closed the door.

Sam smiled and said, “Joe Miller may be sick, but he can still eat ten Polish prizefighters for breakfast and call for a second helping.”

Sharkey did not reply. He signaled through the port that John could come up without fear of being ambushed.

The catamaran was beached now, and the tiny figure of von Richthofen was coming across the plain, holding his grail in one hand and the wooden winged ambassadorial staff in the other. Through the other port Sam could see the lanky figure of de Bergerac leading a
platoon toward the south wall. Livy was not in sight.

John entered.

Sam said, “Bonan matenon, Johano!”

It galled John that Sam refused to address him as *Via Reĝa Moŝ*—Your Majesty—in private. *La Konsulo*—the Consul—was their correct title and even that came reluctantly from Sam’s lips. Sam encouraged others to call him *La Estro*, The Boss, because that angered John even more.

John grunted and sat down at the round table. Another bodyguard, a big dark proto-Mongolian with massive bones and immensely powerful muscles, Zaksksromb, who presumably had died about 30,000 B.C., lit up a huge brown cigar for John. Zak, as he was known, was the strongest man in Parolando, with the exception of Joe Miller. And it could be argued that Joe Miller was not a man—or, at least, certainly not Homo sapiens.

Sam wished Joe would get out of bed. Zak made him nervous. But Joe was sedating himself with dreamgum.
Two days ago a chunk of siderite had slipped from a crane’s tongs as Joe was passing beneath it. The operator swore it had been an accident, but Sam had his suspicions.

Sam puffed on his cigar and said, “Hear anything about your nephew lately?”

John did not start, but his eyes did widen a trifle. He looked at Sam across the table.

“No, should I?”

“I just wondered. I’ve been thinking about asking Arthur down for a conference. There’s no reason why you two should be trying to kill each other. This isn’t Earth, you know. Why can’t we call off old feuds? What if you did drop him off in a sack into the estuary? Let bygones be bygones. We could use his wood, and we need more limestone for calcium carbonate and magnesium. He’s got plenty.”

John glared, then hooded his eyes and smiled.


“To get wood and limestone we’d have to pay with
steel arms,” John said. “I’m not about to permit my dear nephew to get his hands on more steel.”

“Just thought I’d broach the subject to you,” Sam said, “because at noon—”

John stiffened. “Yes?”

“Well, I thought I’d bring up the subject to the Council. We might have a vote on it.”

John relaxed. “Oh?”

Sam thought, You think you’re safe. You’ve got Pedro Ansúrez and Frederick Rolfe on your side and a five-to-three vote in the Council is a nay vote...

Once again he contemplated suspending the Magna Carta so that things could be done that needed to be done. But that might mean civil war and that could mean the end of the dream.

He paced back and forth while John described in a loud voice and sickening detail his latest conquest of his latest blonde. Sam tried to ignore the words; he still got mad because the man boasted, although by now any woman who accepted John had only herself to blame.
The little bell tinkled. Lothar von Richthofen entered. He was now wearing his hair long and so, with his handsome, somewhat Slavic features, he looked like a less stocky and better-looking Göring. The two had known each other well during World War I, since both had served under Baron Manfred von Richthofen, Lothar’s older brother. Lothar was a wild, brash and essentially likable person, but this morning his smiles and his debonair bearing were gone.

“What’s the bad news?” Sam said.

Lothar took the cup of bourbon that Sam offered, downed it, and said, “Sinjoro Hacking has just about finished putting up fortifications. Soul City has walls twelve feet high and ten thick on all fronts. Hacking was nasty to me, very nasty. He called me an ofejo and a honkio, words new to me. I did not care to ask him for an explanation.”

“Ofejo might be from the English ofay,” Sam said, “but I never heard the other word. Honkio?”

“You’ll hear those words a lot in the future,” Lothar said, “if you deal with Hacking. And you will. Hacking finally got down to business after spewing out a torrent
of abuse, mostly about my Nazi ancestors. I never heard of the Nazis on Earth, you know, since I died in a plane crash in 1922. He seemed to be angry about something—maybe his anger had nothing to do with me originally. But the essence of his speech was that he might cut off the bauxite and other minerals.”

Sam leaned on the table until things came back into focus. Then he said, “I’ll take a shot of Kentucky courage myself.”

Von Richthofen continued, “It seems that Hacking isn’t too happy with the makeup of his state. It’s one-fourth Harlem blacks who died between 1960 and 1980, you know, and one-eighth eighteenth-century Dahomean blacks. But he has a one-fourth nonblack population of nineteenth-century Wahhabi Arabs, fanatics who still claim that Mohammed is their prophet and they’re here just for a short trial period. Then there is the one-fourth composed of thirteenth-century Asiatic-Indian, Dravidian, black-skinned Caucasians, and one-eighth of people from anywhere and anytime. A slight majority of the one-eighth is twentieth-century.”

Sam nodded. Though resurrected humanity consisted
of persons who lived from 2,000,000 B.C. to A.D. 2008, one-fourth had been born after A.D. 1899—if estimates were correct.

“Hacking wants his Soul City to be almost entirely black. He said that he had believed that integration was possible when he lived on Earth. The young whites of his day were free of the racial prejudices of their elders and he had known hope. But there aren’t too many of his former white contemporaries in his land. And the Wahhabi Arabs are driving him out of his mind. Hacking became a Moslem on Earth, did you know that? First, he was a Black Muslim, an American home-grown variety. Then he became a real Moslem, made a pilgrimage to Mecca, and was quite certain that the Arabs, even if they were white, were not racists.

“But the massacre of the Sudanese blacks by the Sudanese Arabs and the history of Arabic enslavement of blacks disturbed him. Anyway, these nineteenth-century Wahhabi are not racist—they’re just religious fanatics and too much trouble. He didn’t say so, but I was there ten days and I saw enough. The Wahhabis want to convert Soul City to their brand of Moslemism,
and if they can’t do it peacefully, they’ll do it bloodily. Hacking wants to get rid of them and the Dravidians, who seem to regard themselves as superior to Africans of any color. Anyway, Hacking will continue to furnish us bauxite if we will send him all our black citizens in return for his Wahhabi and Dravidian citizens. Plus an increased amount of steel arms. Plus a larger share in the raw siderite.”

Sam groaned. King John spat on the floor. Sam scowled and said, “Merdo, Johano! Not even a Plantagenet gobs on my floor! Use the spittoon or get out!”

He forced himself to push down his rage and frustration as King John bristled. Now was not a time to bring about a confrontation. The vainglorious ex-monarch would never back down on the spitting issue, which was, in reality, trifling.

Sam gestured self-deprecatingly and said, “Forget about it, John. Spit all you want to!” But he could not resist adding: “As long as I have the same privilege in your house, of course.”
JOHN growled and popped a chocolate into his mouth. He used the growling, grinding voice that indicated that he, too, was very angry but was imposing great self-control.

“This Saracen, Hacking, gets too much. I say we have kissed his black hand long enough. His demands have slowed down the building of the ship—”

“Boat, John,” Sam said. “It’s a boat, not a ship.”

“Boato, ŝmaoto. I say, let us conquer Soul City, put the citizens to the sword, and seize the minerals. Then we will be able to make aluminum on the spot. In fact, we could build the boat there. And, to make sure that we were not interfered with, we should conquer all the states between us and Soul City.”

Powermad John.

Yet, Sam was inclined to think that he might, for once, be right. In a month or so Parolando would have the weapons that would enable it to do just what John was proposing. Except that Publia was friendly and its bills were not high, and Tifonujo, though it demanded much, had permitted itself to be stripped of trees. It was, however, possible that both states planned to use
the nickel-iron they got for their wood to make weapons so that they could attack Parolando.

The savages across The River were probably planning the same thing.

“I’m not through,” von Richthofen said. “Hacking made his demands about the trading of citizens on a one-to-one basis. But he won’t come to any agreement unless we send a black to deal with him. He says he was insulted when you sent me, since I’m a Prussian and a Junker to boot. But he’ll overlook that, since we don’t know any better, if we send him a member of the Council next time. One who’s black.”

Sam’s cigar almost fell out.

“We don’t have a black Councilman!”

“Exactly. What Hacking is saying is that we had better elect one.”

John passed both hands through his shoulder-length tawny hair and then stood up. His pale blue eyes were fiery under the lion-colored eyebrows.

“This Saracen thinks he can tell us how to conduct our internal affairs. I say, War!”
Sam said, “Now, just a minute, dear Johano. You have good reason to be mad, as the old farmer said when he fell in, but the truth is, we can defend ourselves quite well—but we cannot invade and occupy any large territory.”

“Occupy?” John shouted. “We will slaughter half and chain the other half!”

“The world changed much after you died, John—uh, Your Majesty. Admittedly there are other forms of slavery than the outright form, but I don’t want to get into an argument about definitions. There is no use making a fuss, as the fox said to the hens. We just appoint another Councilman, pro tem. And we send him to Hacking.”

“There is no provision in the Magna Carta for a pro tem Councilman,” Lothar said.

“We can change the Carta,” Sam said.

“That’ll take a popular election.”

John snorted disgust. He and Sam Clemens had gone through too many blazing arguments about the rights of the people.
“There’s one other thing,” Lothar said, still smiling but with an exasperated note in his voice. “Hacking asks that Firebrass be allowed to visit here for a tour of inspection. Firebrass is especially interested in seeing our airplane.”

John sputtered. “He asks if we care if he sends a spy?”

“I don’t know,” Sam said. “Firebrass is Hacking’s chief of staff. He might get a different idea of us. He’s an engineer—I think he had a Ph.D., too, in physics. I’ve heard about him. What did you find out, Lothar?”

“He impressed me very much,” von Richthofen said. “He was born in 1974 in Syracuse, New York. His father was black, and his mother was half Irish and half Iroquois Indian. He was in the second party to land on Mars and the first to orbit Jupiter—”

Sam was thinking, *Men really did that! Landed on the Moon and then Mars. Right out of Jules Verne and Frank Reade, Jr. Fantastic, yet no more fantastic than this world. Or, indeed, than the mundane world of 1910. None of it could be explained in a manner to satisfy any reasonable*
man. It was all incredible.

“We’ll put it up to the Council today, John,” Sam said, “if you have no objection. We’ll have a general election on the pro tem Councilman. I personally favor Uzziah Cawber.”

“Cawber was a slave, wasn’t he?” Lothar said. “I don’t know. Hacking said he didn’t want any Uncle Toms.”

Once a slave, always a slave, Sam thought. Even when a slave revolts, kills, and is killed as a protest against his slavery—resurrected, he still does not think of himself as a free man. He was born and raised in a world soaked with the rotten essence of slavedom and every thought he thinks, every move he makes is stained with slavery, subtly altered with slavery. Cawber was born in 1841 in Montgomery, Alabama, he was taught to read and write, he served in the house of his master as his secretary, he killed his master’s son in 1863, escaped, and went West and became a cowboy, of all things, and then a miner. He was killed with a Sioux spear in 1876; the ex-slave killed by a man about to become a
slave. Cawber is delighted with this world—or claims to be—because no man can enslave him here or keep him enslaved. But he is the slave of his own mind and of the reaction of his nerves. Even when he holds his head high, he will jump if somebody cracks a whip, and his head will bow before he can stop it....

Why, oh, why had man been brought back to life? Men and women were ruined by what had happened on Earth, and they would never be able to undo the damage. The Second Chancers claimed a man could change, entirely change. But the Second Chancers were a pack of dreamgummers.

“If Hacking calls Cawber an Uncle Tom, Cawber will kill him,” Sam said. “I say, let’s send him.”

John’s tawny eyebrows rose. Sam knew what he was thinking. Perhaps he could use Cawber, one way or another.

Sam looked at the water clock. “Time for the inspection tour. Care to come along, John? I’ll be with you in a minute,” and he sat down at his desk to make a few more entries in his diary.
That gave John the chance to leave first, as befitted the ex-King of England and of a good part of France. Sam thought it was ridiculous to worry about who preceded whom, yet he disliked John so much he could not bear to let him gain even this minor victory. Rather than argue about it, or just walk out ahead of him, and so cause John to throw a fit, he pretended he had work to do.

Sam caught up with the group, which included the six Councilmen, just outside the nitric-acid factory. They went through the factories swiftly. The stinks emanating from the nitric and sulfuric acids; from the destructive distillation of wood to make alcohol, acetone, creosote, turpentine, and acetic acid; the formaldehyde vats and the treatment of human excrement and lichen scraped off the mountains to extract potassium nitrate—these, combined, were enough to make a hyena lose its breakfast. The Councillors were roasted and deafened in the steel mill and the grinding mills and the forges and blacksmith shops. They were covered with a white dust in the limestone mills and magnesium factory. In the
aluminum factory they were again roasted, deafened, and stunk out.

The gunsmith shop up in the hills was not operating at the moment. Except for distant noises, it was quiet. But it was not beautiful. The earth had been dug up, the trees cut down, and smoke from the factories up The River was black and acrid along the mountains.

Van Boom, the late-twentieth-century half Zulu, half Afrikaans chief engineer, met them. He was a handsome man with a dark bronze skin and curly hair. He stood about six-three and weighed about two hundred and fifty. He had been born in a ditch during The Bloody Years.

He greeted them cordially enough (he liked Sam and tolerated John), but he did not smile as usual.

“It’s ready,” he said, “but I want my objections recorded. It’s a nice toy and makes a lot of noise and looks impressive and will kill a man. But it’s wasteful and inefficient.”

“You make it sound like a Congressman,” Sam said.

Van Boom led them into the high doorway of the bamboo building, where a steel handgun lay on a table.
Van Boom picked it up. Even in his big hand, the gun was huge. He strode past the others and out into the light of the sun. Sam was exasperated. He had held out his hand for the gun and the fellow had ignored him. If van Boom intended to demonstrate it outside, why hadn’t he said so in the first place?

“Engineers,” Sam muttered. Then he shrugged. You might as well hit a Missouri mule between the eyes with your pinkie as try to change van Boom’s ways.

Van Boom held up the gun so that the sunshine twinkled against the silvery gray metal. “This is the Mark I pistol,” he said. “Called so because The Boss invented it.”

Sam’s anger melted like ice in a Mississippi River thaw.

“It’s a breech-loading, single-shot, flintlock hand weapon with a rifled barrel and a breakdown action.”

He held the gun in his right hand and said, “You load it so. You press forward the lock switch on the left side of the barrel. This releases the breech lock. You then press down the barrel with the left hand. This action forces the trigger guard into the grip, where the guard
acts as a lever to cock the hammer.”

He reached into a bag strapped to his belt and removed a large brown hemispherical object. “This is a Bakelite or phenol-formaldehyde-resin bullet, sixty caliber. You press the bullet, so, until it engages the lands of the barrel.”

He removed from his bag a shiny package with black contents.

“This is a charge of black gunpowder wrapped in cellulose nitrate. Some time in the future, we’ll have cordite instead of gunpowder. If we use this gun, that is. Now, I insert the load into the chamber with the primer end first. The primer is a twist of nitrate paper impregnated with gunpowder. Then I lift the barrel with my left hand, thus, locking it into place. The Mark I is now ready to fire. But, for emergency, if the primer does not ignite, you can pour priming powder into the touchhole just forward of the rear sight. In case of misfire, the gun may be cocked with the right thumb. Note that this flash vent on the right side of the action shield protects the shooter’s face.”
A man had brought out a large wooden target and had inserted it in a frame on four legs. The target was about twenty yards away. Van Boom turned toward it, held out the gun, clenched both hands, and sighted along the front and rear sights.

“Get behind me, gentlemen,” he said. “The heat of the passage through the air will burn off the surface of the bullet and leave a thin trail of smoke which you may be able to see. The plastic bullet has to be of such large caliber because of its light weight. But this increases the wind resistance. If we decide to use this gun—which I definitely am against—we might increase the caliber to seventy-five in the Mark II. The effective range is about fifty yards, but the accuracy is not good beyond thirty yards and nothing to brag about within that range.”

The flint was in the hammer. When van Boom would pull the trigger, the hammer would fall and scrape along the filelike surface of the frizzen. The frizzen covered the priming pan and should be knocked forward by the flint, uncovering the primer twist of the powder charge.

There was a click as the sear let the hammer go, a flash as the primer twist burned, and a booming. The
click-flash-boom took up a time equal to saying click-flash-boom and van Boom had had time between the click and the boom to bring the gun back into line after it had been jarred away by the impact of the heavy hammer and flint.

The bullet did leave a very faint trail of smoke, quickly dissipated by the fifteen-mile-an-hour wind. Sam, looking past van Boom’s arm, could see the bullet curve out and then back, carried by the wind. But van Boom must have been practicing, because the bullet struck near the bull’s eye. It went halfway into the soft pine, shattered, and left a large hole in the wood.

“The bullet won’t penetrate deeply into a man,” van Boom said, “but it will leave a large hole. And if it hits near bone, the fragments should break the bone.”

The next hour was spent busily and happily with the Consuls and Councillors taking turns shooting. King John was especially delighted, though perhaps a little awed, because he had never seen a gun before. His first experience with gunpowder had come several years after he had been resurrected and he had then seen only bombs and rockets.
At last van Boom said, “If you keep up, gentlemen, you will exhaust our supply of bullets—and it takes a lot of labor and materials to make these bullets. Which is one reason why I object to making any more. My other reasons are: one, the gun is accurate only at close range; two, it takes so long to load and shoot that a good bowman could drop three pistol handlers while they’re loading and stay outside the effective range of the guns. Moreover, a plastic bullet isn’t recoverable, whereas an arrow is.”

Sam said, “That’s a lot of nonsense! The mere fact that we would have these guns would demonstrate our technological and military superiority. We’d scare the enemy half to death before the battle started. Also, you forget that it takes a long time to train a good bowman, but anyone can shoot one of these after a relatively short lesson.”

“True,” van Boom said. “But could they hit anyone? Besides, I was thinking of making steel crossbows. They can’t be handled as fast as longbows, but they don’t require any more training than guns do, and the bolts are recoverable. And they’re a hell of a lot more deadly than these noisy, stinking gadgets.”
“No, sir!” Sam said. “No, sir! I insist that we make at least two hundred of these. We’ll outfit a new group, the Parolando Pistoleers. They’ll be the terror of The River—you watch them! You’ll see!”
For a change King John was on Sam’s side. He insisted that the first two pistols should go to Sam and himself and the next dozen to their bodyguards. Then the new group could be organized and trained.

Sam was grateful for the backing, but he told himself to check on the men who formed the Pistoleers. He did not want it made up largely of men loyal to John.

Van Boom made no effort to hide his disgust. “I’ll tell you what! I’ll take a good yew bow and twelve arrows and stand fifty yards away. At a signal all eight of you can advance on me, firing at will with your Mark I’s—and I’ll drop all eight of you before you get close enough to hit me! Is it a deal? I’m willing to lay my life on the line!”

“Don’t be childish,” Sam said.

Van Boom rolled his eyes upward. “I’m childish? You’re jeopardizing Parolando—and your boat—because you want guns to play with!”
“Just as soon as the guns are made you can start making all the bows you want,” Sam said. “Look! We’ll make armor, too, for the Pistoleers! That should dispose of your objections! Why didn’t I think of that before? Why, our men will be dressed up in steel that’ll repel the Stone Age weapons of the enemy as if they were straws. Let the enemy shoot his yew bows with his flint-tipped arrows. They’ll bounce off the steel and the Pistoleers can take their time and blow the enemy into the next county!”

“You forget that we’ve had to barter our ore and even metal weapons for wood and other materials we need,” van Boom said. “The enemy will have arrows with steel tips that can drive through armor. Don’t forget Crécy and Agincourt.”

“There’s just no dealing with you,” Sam said. “You must be half Dutch—you’re so stubborn.”

“If your thinking is representative of the thinking of white men, then I’m glad I’m half Zulu,” van Boom said.

“Don’t get huffy,” Sam replied. “And congratulations on the gun! Tell you what, we’ll call it the Van Boom–Mark I. How’s that?”
“I’d just as soon not have my name attached to it,” the engineer said. “So be it. I’ll make your two hundred guns. But I’d like to make an improved version, the Mark II we talked about.”

“Let’s make two hundred of these first, then we’ll start on the Mark II,” Sam said. “We don’t want to mess around so long trying to get the perfect weapon that we suddenly find we don’t have any at all. Still—”

He talked for a while about the Mark II. He had a passion for mechanical gadgets. On Earth he had invented a number of things, all of which were going to make him a fortune. And there was the Paige typesetting machine, into which he had sunk—and it had sunk—all the wealth he had made from his books.

Sam thought of the typesetting monster and how that wonderful contraption had bankrupted him. For a second, Paige and van Boom were one and he felt guilty and a little panicky.

Van Boom next complained about the materials and the labor put into the AMP-I, their aerial machine prototype. Sam ignored him. He went with the others to the hangar, which was on the plains a mile north of
Sam’s quarters. The craft was only partly finished but would look almost as skeletal and frail when ready to fly as it did now.

“It’s similar to some of the planes built in 1910,” von Richthofen said. “I’ll be exposed from my waist up when I sit in the cockpit. The whole machine looks more like a metal dragonfly than anything else. The main object is to test out the efficiency of the wood-alcohol-burning motor and our materials.”

Von Richthofen promised that the first flight would be made within three weeks. He showed Sam the plans for the rocket launchers which would be attached under the wings.

“The plane can carry about six small rockets, but it’ll mostly be good only for scouting. It won’t go faster than forty miles an hour against the wind. But it’ll be fun flying it.”

Sam was disappointed that the plane wasn’t a two-seater. He looked forward to flying for the first time in his life—his second life, that is. But von Richthofen said the next prototype would be a two-seater and Sam would be his first passenger.
“After you’ve tested it out,” Sam said. He expected John to protest about this and to insist that he be taken up first. But evidently John was not too eager to leave the ground.

The last stop was at the boatyard, located halfway between the hangar and Sam’s house. The craft within the pine-log enclosure would be completed within a week. The *Firedragon I* was the amphibious prototype of the boat that would be the launch for the big boat. It was a beautiful machine, made of thick magnalium, about thirty-two feet long, shaped like a U.S. Navy cruiser with wheels, with three turrets on its sleek top deck. It was powered by steam, burned wood alcohol, could operate in water or on land, carried a crew of eleven, and was, so Sam declared, invincible.

He patted the cold gray hull and said, “Why should we worry about having bowmen? Or having anything but this? This juggernaut could crush a kingdom all by itself. It has a steam-powered cannon the like of which the world, Earth or this planet, has never seen. That is why it is steam-driven and why it has such a huge boiler.”
All in all, the tour had made him happy. It was true that the plans for the great Riverboat had barely been started. But those took time. It was vital that the state be well protected at first, and just making the preparations was fun. He rubbed his hands and puffed on a new cigar, drawing the green smoke deeply into his lungs.

And then he saw Livy.

His beloved Livy, sick for so many years, and dead, finally, in Italy, in 1904.

Restored to life and youth and beauty, but not, alas, to him.

She was walking toward him, carrying her grail by its handle, wearing a white scarlet-edged kilt that came halfway down her thighs and a thin white scarf for a bra. She had a fine figure, good legs, handsome features. Her forehead was broad and satiny white. Her eyes were large and luminous. Her lips were full and shapely; her smile, attractive; her teeth, small and very white. She customarily wore her dark hair parted, combed down smooth in front but twisted into a figure eight in
the back. Behind an ear she wore one of the giant crimson roselike blooms that grew from the vines on the iron trees. Her necklace was made of the convoluted red vertebrae of the hornfish.

Sam’s heart felt as if it were being licked by a cat.

She swayed as she walked toward him, and her breasts bounced beneath the semiopaque fabric. Here was his Livy, who had always been so modest, had worn heavy clothes from the neck down to the ankle, and had never undressed before him in the light. Now she reminded him of the half-naked women of the Sandwich Islands. He felt uneasy, and he knew why. His queasiness among the natives had been as much due to their unwanted attraction for him as repulsion, each feeling depending on the other and having nothing to do with the natives per se.

Livy had had a Puritanical upbringing, but she had not been ruined by it. On Earth she had learned to drink and to like beer, had even smoked a few times, and had become an infidel or, at least, a great doubter. She had even tolerated his constant swearing and had let loose with a few blisterers herself if the girls were not around.
The accusations that she had censored his books and thus emasculated them were off the target. He had done most of the censoring himself.

Yes, Livy had always shown adaptability.

Too much. Now, after twenty years of absence from him, she had fallen in love with Cyrano de Bergerac. And Sam had the uneasy feeling that that wild Frenchman had awakened in her something that Sam might have awakened if he had not been so inhibited himself. But after these years on The River and the chewing of a certain amount of dreamgum, he had lost many of his own inhibitions.

It was too late for him.

Unless Cyrano left the scene…

“Hello, Sam,” she said in English. “How are you on this fine day?”

“Every day is fine here,” he said. “You can’t even talk about the weather, let alone do anything about it!”

She had a beautiful laugh. “Come along with me to the grailstone,” she said. “It’s almost time for lunch.”

Every day he swore not to come near her because to
do so hurt too much. And every day he took advantage of the smallest chance to get as close to her as he could.

“How’s Cyrano?” he said.

“Oh, very happy because he’s finally getting a rapier. Bildron, the swordsmith, promised that he’d have the first one—after yours and the other Councilmen’s, of course. Cyrano had taken so long to reconcile himself to the fact that he would never hold a metal sword in his hand again. Then he heard about the meteorite and came here—and now the greatest swordsman in the world will have a chance to show everybody that his reputation wasn’t a lie, which some liars say it was.”

“Now, Livy,” he said. “I didn’t say people lied about his reputation. I said that maybe they exaggerated some. I still don’t believe that story about his holding off two hundred swordsmen all by himself.”

“The fight at the Porte de Nesle was authentic! And it wasn’t two hundred! You’re the one pumping it up, Sam, just as you always do. There was a crowd of hired thugs that could have been a hundred or might just as well have been. Even if there had been only twenty-five, the fact is that Cyrano attacked them all single-
handed to save his friend, the Chevalier de Lignières.

"He killed two and wounded seven and ran the rest of them off. That is God’s truth!"

"I don’t want to get into an argument about the merits of your man," he said. "Or about anything. Let’s just talk like we used to when we had so much fun—before you got sick."

She stopped. Her face set grimly.

"I always knew you resented my illness, Sam."

"No, that wasn’t it," he said. "I think I felt guilty that you were sick, as if somehow I were to blame. But I never hated you for it. I hated myself if I hated anyone."

"I didn’t say you hated me," she said. "I said you resented my illness and you showed it in many ways. Oh, you may have thought you were always noble and gentle and loving—and most of the time you were—you really were. But there were enough times when you looked, you spoke, you muttered, you gestured—how can I describe exactly how you were? I can’t, but I knew you resented me, sometimes loathed me, because I was sick."
“I didn’t!” he cried so loudly that a number of people stared.

“Why argue about it? Whether you did or not doesn’t matter now. I loved you then and I still do, in a way. But not as I did.”

He was silent during the rest of the walk across the plain to the big mushroom-shaped stone. The cigar tasted like burning skunk cabbage.

Cyrano was not present. He was superintending the building of a section of the wall which would eventually guard the shore of The River. Sam was glad. It was difficult enough for him to see Livy alone, but when she was with the Frenchman, he could not endure his thoughts.

In silence, he and Livy parted.

…

A beautiful woman with lovely, honey-colored hair approached him, and he was able to set aside his feelings about Livy for a while. The woman’s name was Gwenafra. She had died at about the age of seven in a
country that must have been Cornwall about the time the Phoenicians came there to exploit the tin mines. She had been resurrected among people of whom none spoke her ancient Celtic language and had been adopted by a group that spoke English. From her description, one of them had been that Sir Richard Francis Burton whom Sam had thought he’d seen on the shore just before the meteorite struck. Burton and his friends had built a small sailboat and set out for the headwaters of The River—as might have been expected of a man who had spent half his life exploring in the wildernesses of Africa and the other continents. On Earth Burton had sought the headwaters of the Nile and had found, instead, Lake Tanganyika. But on this world he had again been seeking the source of a river—the greatest River of them all—undaunted by the prospect that it might be ten million miles long or even twenty.

After little more than a year, his boat had been attacked by evil men, and one had stuck a stone knife into little Gwenafra and thrown her into The River, where she had drowned. She had awakened the next day on the banks somewhere far up in the northern
hemisphere. The weather was colder, the sun weaker, and the people there said that you did not have to go more than twenty thousand grailstones before you were in an area where the sun was always half above, half below the mountains. And there lived hairy, ape-faced men ten feet tall and weighing seven to eight hundred pounds.

(This was true, Joe Miller had been one of the titanthrops there.)

The people upRiver who adopted her spoke Suomenkieltä, which in English meant Finnish. DownRiver a little way were Swedes, twentieth-century people who lived a peaceful life. Gwenafra grew up relatively happy with her loving foster parents. She learned Finnish, Swedish, English, a Chinese dialect of the fourth century B.C., and Esperanto.

She drowned again by accident one day and woke up in this area. She still remembered Burton; she cherished a childhood crush she had had for him. But, being a realist, she was ready to love other men. And she had—and had just split with one, Sam had heard. She wanted a man who would be faithful to her, and
these were not easy to find in this world.

Sam was very much attracted to her. The only thing that had kept him from asking her to move in with him had been the fear of angering Livy. That fear was ridiculous—she had no claim on him as long as she was living with Cyrano. And she had made it plain that she did not care what he did in his private life or his public life. Nevertheless, against all logic, he was afraid to take another woman as his hutmate. He did not want to snap the last thin link.

He chatted with Gwenafra awhile and confirmed that she was still unattached.
Lunch was upsetting. The “roulette wheel” concealed somewhere in the false bottom of the grail, the wild caster of dice, came up with a meal that only a Goshute Indian could have swallowed and even he might have gagged a little. Sam threw out all the food but was able to console himself with two cigars, cigarettes, and six ounces of an unfamiliar but delicious liqueur. Just smelling it sent his taste buds into a dance.

The meeting with John and the Council took three hours. After much wrangling and a number of votes, it was decided to put to the people the question of amending the Carta so that a pro tem Councilman could be elected. John held up things for an hour, arguing that a vote wasn’t needed. Why couldn’t the Council simply say that the amendment was passed and that would be the end of it? No amount of explaining ever seemed to clarify such matters in John’s head. It was not that he was unintelligent. It was just that he was not emotionally able to comprehend democracy.
The vote was unanimous to accept Firebrass as Hacking's official visiting fireman. But he would have a close eye kept on him.

After all this John rose and made a speech, occasionally lapsing from Esperanto into Norman French when he was overpowered by emotion. He thought that Parolando should invade Soul City before Soul City invaded Parolando. The invasion should be launched as soon as the handguns and the armored amphibian, *Firedragon I*, were ready. However, it might be best to test the mettle of their iron and the troops on New Brittany first. His spies were certain that Arthur planned to attack them soon.

John's two toadies backed him, but the others, including Sam, voted them down. John's face became red, and he swore and beat his fists on the oak table, but nobody decided to change his mind.

After supper the drums relayed a message from Hacking. Firebrass would be arriving tomorrow, sometime before noon.

Sam retired to his office. By the light of lamps burning fish oil—soon they would have electricity—he
and van Boom and Tanya Velitsky and John Wesley O’Brien, the engineers, discussed their ideas about the Riverboat and drew rough sketches on paper. Paper was still scarce, but they would need enormous amounts for their blueprints. Van Boom said that they should wait until they were able to make a certain kind of plastic. Lines could be drawn on this with magnetized “pens” and corrections could easily be made by demagnetizing. Sam replied that that was fine. But he wanted to start building the Riverboat the moment the amphibian was completed. Van Boom said that he could not agree to that. Too many things were in the way.

Before the meeting broke up van Boom pulled a Mark I gun out of a large bag. “We have ten of these now,” he said. “This one is yours, compliments of Parolando’s Engineering Corps. And here are twenty packages of powder and twenty plastic bullets. You can sleep with them under your pillow.”

Sam thanked him, the engineers left, and Sam barred the door. Then he went into the back room to talk to Joe Miller awhile. Joe was still awake, but he said he was taking no sedation that night. He would be getting
up in the morning. Sam bade the giant good-night and went into his bedroom, next to the pilothouse. He drank two shots of bourbon and lay down. After a while he managed to doze, though he was afraid that the three o’clock rain would wake him as usual and he would have trouble getting back to sleep.

He awoke, but the rain was long past. Shouts came from somewhere and then an explosion that rattled the pilothouse. Sam leaped out of bed, wrapped a kilt around his waist, seized an ax, and ran into the pilothouse. He suddenly remembered his pistol, but he decided he would go back for it when he found out what was going on.

The River was still smothered in fog, but hundreds of dark figures were spilling out of it, and the tops of tall masts were sticking out above it. Torches were flaring all over the plains and in the hills. Drums were beating.

There was another explosion. A brightness in the night with bodies flying in all directions.

He looked through the starboard port. The gates of the log wall around King John’s palace were open, and
men were streaming out. Among them was the stocky figure of John.

By then more men had appeared out of the mists over The River. Bright starlight showed them lining up and moving out, rank after rank. The first of the invaders were by now in the great factories and advancing swiftly across the plain toward the foothills. Some explosions occurred inside factories as bombs were thrown to dislodge the defenders. And then a red tail flared out, disappeared, and something black shot toward him. Sam threw himself to the floor. A roar came beneath him, the floor heaved, and the glass ports blew in. A whiff of acrid smoke came to him and was gone.

He should get up and run, but he couldn’t. He was deafened and frozen. Another rocket would be coming his way, and that one might be closer.

A giant hand gripped his shoulder and pulled him up. Another hand slid under his legs and he was being carried out. The arms and the chest of the giant were very hairy and as hard-muscled and as warm as a gorilla’s. A voice as deep as if it were at the end of a
railroad tunnel rumbled, “Take it eathy, Bothth.”

“Put me down, Joe,” Sam said. “I’m all right, except for my shame. And that’s all right, too, I ought to feel ashamed.”

His shock was fading, and a sense of relative calm flowed in to fill the vacuum. The appearance of the massive titanthrop had steadied him. Good old Joe—he might be a dumb subhuman and sick at the moment, but he was still worth a battalion.

Joe had put on his suit of leather armor. In one hand was the haft of an enormous double-headed ax of steel.

“Who are they?” he rumbled. “They from Thoul Thity?”

“I don’t know,” Sam said. “Do you feel up to fighting? How’s the head?”

“It hurtth. Yeah, I can fight okay. Vhere do ve go from here?”

Sam led him downhill toward the men collecting around John. He heard his name called and turned to see the tall lanky figure of de Bergerac, Livy by his side. She carried a small round shield of leather-covered oak
and a steel-tipped spear. Cyrano held a long, dully shining blade. Sam’s eyes widened. It was a rapier.

Cyrano said, “Morbleu!” He switched to Esperanto. “Your smith gave this to me just after supper—he said there was no sense in waiting.”

Cyrano whipped the rapier, cutting the air with a sharp sound.

“I’ve come alive again. Steel—sharp steel!”

A nearby explosion made them all dive for the ground. Sam waited until he was sure that another rocket was not coming and then looked at his pilothouse. It had received a direct hit; its front was blown open; a fire was racing through it and would soon be in the texas. His diary was gone, but he could retrieve his grail later. It was indestructible.

In the next few minutes the wooden missiles, tails flaming, arched out, wobbling, from wooden bazookas held on the shoulders of the Parolandoj rocketeers. The missiles landed near and sometimes among the enemy and exploded with gouts of fire and much black smoke,
quickly carried away by the wind.

Three runners reported. The attack had been launched from three places, all from The River. The main body was concentrated here, apparently to seize the Parolandoj leaders, the larger factories and amphibian. The other two armies were about a mile away on each side. The invaders were composed of men from New Brittany and Kleomenjujo and the Ulmaks from across The River. The Ulmaks were savages who had lived in Siberia circa 30,000 B.C. and whose descendants had migrated across the Bering Straits to become Amerindians.

So much for King John’s spy service, Sam thought. Unless—unless he is in on the attack. But if he were he wouldn’t be standing out here where he’s likely to get killed any moment…

Anyway, Arthur of New Brittany would never make a deal with the uncle who had murdered him.

The rockets continued to arc down from both sides, the five-pound warheads with their rock-fragment shrapnel taking a toll. The Parolandoj had the advantage; they could lie flat while their rockets
exploded among upright targets. The invaders had to keep moving, otherwise they might just as well go home.

Nevertheless, it was frightening to lie on the ground and wait for the next noisy blast and hope that it would not come closer than the last one. There were screams from the wounded that were not, however, as heartrending as they would have been if Sam had not been so deafened that he could barely hear them and if he also had not been too worried about himself to think of others. Then, suddenly, the rockets had quit blowing up the world. A huge hand shook Sam’s shoulder. He looked up to see that many around him were getting to their feet. The sergeants were yelling into the stunned ears of their men to form a battle array. The enemy was so close now that neither side was using the missiles or else they had all been launched.

Ahead was a dark body, a sea of screaming, whooping fiends. They ran up the hill and the first, second, and third ranks fell, pierced by arrows. But those behind did not break. They leaped over the fallen and kept on coming. Suddenly, the archers were being hammered down or thrust through or clubbed.
Sam kept close behind Joe Miller, who moved ahead slowly, his ax rising and falling. And then the giant was down, and the enemy were struggling on top of him like a pack of jackals on a lion. Sam tried to get to him; his ax smashed through a shield and a head and an uplifted arm and then he felt a burning pain along his ribs. He was pushed back and back, while he slashed away with the ax and then it was gone, wedged in a skull. He stumbled over a pile of wood. Above him was the burning floor of his smashed house, still held up by three burning pylons.

He turned on his side, and there was the handgun, the Mark I, that he had left by his bedside. Near it lay three packages of powder with the nitrate-soaked twists and a number of the plastic bullets. The explosion had hurled them out of the house.

Two men whirled by him in a dance, their hands gripping each other, straining, grunting with the strain, glaring into each other’s bloody faces. They stopped, and Sam recognized King John—his opponent was taller but not as thickly built. He had lost his helmet, and
he, too, had tawny hair and eyes that were blue in the light of the flames overhead.

Sam broke open the pistol, put in the bullet and the charge as he had done that morning up in the hills, locked the barrel, and rose to his feet. The two men still struggled, one slipping back a little, then the other, trying to throw each other. John held a steel knife in his right hand; the other man, a steel ax; each was grasping the weapon hand of the other.

Sam looked around. No one was coming at him. He stepped forward and extended the muzzle of the big pistol, holding it steady with both hands. He pulled the trigger; the click sounded, the gun was jarred to one side by the heavy hammer; there was a flash, he had the gun back in line, a boom, a cloud of smoke, and John’s assailant fell to one side, the entire right side of his skull blown away.

John fell gasping onto the ground. Then he raised himself, looking at Sam, who was reloading the gun. “Many thanks, partner! That man was my nephew, Arthur!”

Sam did not reply. If he had been thinking more
coolly he would have waited until Arthur had killed John and then blown Arthur’s head off. It was ironic that he, Sam, who had much to gain by John’s death, should be responsible for saving him. Moreover, he could not expect gratitude from John. The man had no such thing in his soul.

Sam completed reloading the pistol and strode away, looking for Joe Miller. But he saw Livy reeling backward as a big Ulmak, whose left arm dangled bloodily, drove her back with blows of a stone ax on her shield. Her spear had been broken and in a few seconds he would have beaten her to her knees or shattered the shield. Sam reversed the pistol and broke the Ulmak’s skull from behind with the butt of his gun. Livy fell exhausted and weeping on the ground. He would have gotten down to comfort her, but she seemed all right and he did not know where Joe Miller was. He plunged into the embattled mass and saw Joe on his feet again, demolishing heads, trunks, and arms with sweeps of his great ax.

Sam stopped a few paces from a man who was coming up from behind Joe, a large ax in both hands. Sam fired, and the bullet took part of the man’s chest
A minute later, the invaders were running for their lives. The sky was graying. By its light it was evident that Parolandoj were coming in from north and south. The other two columns had been shattered, and the reinforcements were outnumbering the invaders. Moreover, they brought rockets which blew up the boats and canoes waiting for the defeated.

Sam felt too exhilarated to be depressed by the losses and the damage. For the first time he came out of the blue funk that always seized him during a fight. He actually enjoyed the battle during the last ten minutes.

A moment later his pleasure was gone. A wild-eyed and naked Hermann Göring, his scalp caked with blood, appeared on the battleground. His arms were raised straight up, and he was shouting, “Oh, brothers and sisters! Shame! Shame! You have killed, you have hated, you have lusted for the blood and the ecstasy of murder! Why did you not throw down your arms and take in your enemies with love? Let them do with you what they would? You would have died and suffered
but final victory would have been yours! The enemy would have felt your love—and the next time he might have hesitated before again waging war. And the time after that and the next time he might have asked himself, "What am I doing? Why am I doing this? What good is this? I have gained nothing—' and your love would have seeped through the stone over his heart and—"

John, coming up behind Göring, struck him on the back of the head with the hilt of his knife. Göring fell forward and lay on his face without moving.

"So much for traitors!" John shouted. He stared around wildly and then yelled, "Where are Trimalchio and Mordaunt, my ambassadors?"

Sam said, "They wouldn't be stupid enough to hang around here. You'll never catch them. They'll know you know they sold out to Arthur."

John's striking of Göring was illegal, since free speech was everyone's right in Parolando. But Sam did not think that arresting John would be the right course at that moment. He, too, had felt like hitting Göring.

Livy, still weeping, staggered past. Sam followed her to where Cyrano sat on a pile of corpses. The
Frenchman was wounded in a dozen places, though not seriously, and his rapier was bloody from tip to guard. He had given a splendid account of himself.

Livy threw herself on Cyrano. Sam turned away. She had not even thanked him for having saved her life.

There was a crash behind him. He turned. The rest of his house had fallen in, bringing the pylons with it.

He felt drained of strength, but there would be little rest for him today. The casualties and the damage had to be assessed. The dead had to be taken to the rendering factory up in the hills, since their fat was used to make glycerin. The practice was gruesome but necessary, and the owners of the bodies did not mind. Tomorrow they would be alive and well again somewhere far away along The River.

In addition, the entire population would have to be kept ready for a call to arms, and the work of erecting the walls along the River-edge would have to be speeded up. Scouts and messengers would have to be sent out to determine just what the military situation was. The Ulmaks and the Kleomenujoj and the New Bretons might launch a full-scale attack.
A captain reported that Kleomenes, the leader of Kleomenijujo, had been found dead near the River-edge, where a piece of rock shrapnel had entered his skull. So ended the half-brother of the great Spartan, Leonidas, who defended the pass of Thermopylae. Or so he ended in this area, at least.

Sam appointed some men to leave by boat immediately for the two countries. They were to inform them that Parolando did not intend to take vengeance if the new leaders would guarantee friendship to Parolando. John complained that he should have been consulted, and there was a short but savage argument. Sam finally agreed that John was right in principle, but there was no time to discuss certain matters. John informed him that, under the law, Sam had to take the time. Any decision had to be agreed upon by both of them.

Sam hated to agree, but John was right. They couldn’t be giving contradictory orders.

They went together to inspect the factories. These were not badly damaged. The invaders had not, of course, wanted to wreck them since they had intended
to use them. The amphibian, the *Firedragon I*, was untouched. Sam shuddered when he thought of what might have happened if it had been completed and had fallen into the hands of the enemy. With it, they could have crushed the Parolandoj in the center and dug in to fight on the perimeter until reinforcements came. He would set up a large special guard around the vehicle.

He fell asleep after lunch in a Councilman’s hut. It seemed that he had just closed his eyes when he was shaken awake. Joe was standing over him, breathing bourbon fumes from his tremendous proboscis.

“The delagathyon from Thoul Thity jutht landed.”

“Firebrass!” Sam said, standing up from the chair. “I forgot all about him! What a time for him to show up!”

He walked down to The River, where a catamaran was beached near the grailstone. John was already there, greeting the delegation, which consisted of six blacks, two Arabs, and two Asiatic Indians. Firebrass was a short, bronze-skinned, curly-haired man with big brown eyes flecked with green. His huge forehead and shoulders and thickly muscled arms contrasted with his
skinny legs, making him look all top. He spoke in Esperanto at first but later used English. It was a very strange English, full of terms and slang that Sam did not understand. But there was a warmth and openness about Firebrass that made Sam feel good just to have him around.

“We better go back to Esperanto,” Sam said, smiling and pouring three more slugs of scotch into Firebrass’ cup. “Is that spaceman’s lingo or Soul City dialect?”

“Marsman’s,” Firebrass said. “Soul City English is pretty wild, but the official language, of course, is Esperanto, though Hacking was considering Arabic. But he isn’t too happy about his Arabs anymore,” he added in a lower voice, looking at Abd ar-Rahman and Ali Fazghuli, the Arab members of his delegation.

“As you can see,” Sam said, “we are in no condition to have a long, leisurely conference. Not now. We have to clean up, get information about what’s going on outside Parolando, and set up our defenses. But you are welcome, of course, and we’ll get around to business within a few days.”

“I don’t mind,” Firebrass said. “I’d like to look
around, if you don’t mind.”

“I don’t, but my co-Consul has to give his consent, too.”

John, smiling as if it hurt his teeth to be exposed to the air—and it probably did this time—said that Firebrass was welcome. But he would have to be accompanied by a guard of honor every time he left the quarters that would be assigned to him. Firebrass thanked him, but another delegate, Abdullah X, protested loudly and occasionally obscenely. Firebrass said nothing for a minute and then told Abdullah to be polite, since they were guests. Sam was grateful, though he wondered if the speech and Firebrass’ command had not been prearranged.

It had not been easy to sit there and listen, though the vitriolics had been hurled at the white race in general and no one in particular. It troubled him, but Sam had to agree with Abdullah. He was right about conditions as they had been. But old Earth was dead; they were living in a new world.

Sam personally conducted the delegates to three huts, side by side, owned by men and women who had
been killed last night. Then he moved into a hut near the delegation.

Drums boomed by the grailstone. After a minute, drums from across The River thundered back an answer. The new chief of the Ulmaks wanted peace. The old chief, Shrubgrain, had been put to death, and his head would be delivered within the hour by canoe if peace could be arranged. Shrubgrain had failed his people by leading them to defeat.

Sam gave orders to transmit a request for a conference with the new chief, Threelburm.

Drums from Chernsky’s Land said that Iyeyasu, who ruled a twelve-mile stretch of land between New Brittany and Kleomenujo, had invaded New Brittany. The news meant that the New Bretons would not be bothering Parolando, but it also worried Sam. Iyeyasu was a very ambitious man. Once he had consolidated his state with New Brittany he might decide he was strong enough to take Parolando.

More drums. Publius Crassus sent his congratulations and warmest regards, and he would be visiting tomorrow to see what he could do to aid Parolando.
And also to see how hard we’ve been hit and if we’d be easy pickings, Sam thought. So far, Publius had been cooperative, but a man who had served under Julius Caesar could have his own brand of Caesarism.

Göring, his head wrapped in a bloody towel, staggered by, supported by two of his followers. Sam hoped he would take the hint and leave Parolando, but he didn’t have much faith in the German’s perceptiveness.

He went to sleep that night while torches burned everywhere over the land and guards peered into the shadows and the mists. His sleep was troubled, despite his intense fatigue. He tossed and rolled and once he awoke, his heart beating, his skin cold, certain that there was a third person in the hut. He fully expected to see the shadowy figure of the Mysterious Stranger crouched by his bed. But nobody was there except the monstrous form of Joe stretched out on the huge bamboo bed near him.
he next morning he arose unrefreshed in a refreshed world. The three o’clock rain had washed away the blood and the stink of gunpowder. The bodies were gone, and the sky was clear and blue. Business as usual was resumed but without about four hundred and fifty men and women. Half of these were in the rendering factory; the rest, in the hospital. Those who wanted to be put out of their misery were given their wish. Time had been when an ax was the only euthanasiast but now, thanks to Parolando’s technology, the work was done with a potassium cyanide pill.

Some decided to stick it out. In time their limbs or eyes would grow back in. Those who could not take the pain boarded The Suicide Express, and the bodies they left behind went to the rendering factory.

Sam’s secretary had been killed. Sam asked Gwenafra if she would like to take Millie’s place. Gwenafra seemed very pleased. The new position gave
her a high status, and she had made no secret of the fact that she liked to be near Sam. Lothar von Richthofen, however, did not seem pleased.

“Why shouldn’t she be my secretary, regardless of her relationship to you?” Sam said.

“There is no reason,” Lothar said, “except that I might have a very good chance with her if she isn’t around you much.”

“Let the best man win.”

“My sentiments, too, but I don’t like your wasting her time or leading her on. You know that you won’t take another hutmate as long as Livy is here.”

“Livy has nothing to say about what I do,” Sam said. “I would be pleased if you’d remember that.”

Lothar smiled slightly and said, “Sure, Sam.”

Gwenafra tagged along with him, taking notes, sending messages, receiving them, arranging schedules and appointments. Though he was very busy, he found moments when he could talk and joke with her and he felt a warmth every time he looked at her. Gwenafra seemed to adore him.
Two days passed. The twenty-four-hour shift on the amphibian was showing results. The machine would be completed in another two days. The Soul City delegation strolled around with two of King John’s men watching them. Joe Miller, who had gone back to his bed after the battle, said he was well again. Now Sam had both Gwenafra and the titanthrop with him, and his world seemed much more comfortable, though it was a long way from being Utopia. Word came via the drum telegraph that Odysseus had loaded his ships with flints and would be back in a month. He had gone as commander of a ten-boat fleet to barter with the chieftainess of Selinujo. On Earth she had been Countess Huntingdon, Selina Hastings, born 1707, died 1791. She was now a member of the Church of the Second Chance and traded her flint with Parolando only because Parolando permitted Göring’s missionaries to preach at will in its territory. In return for the flint, she had been promised a small metal steamboat in which she proposed to go up and down The River and preach. Sam thought she was fooling herself. The first place she put into, she was liable to have her throat cut for the sake of the boat. But that
was her business.

The Councilmen met with the Soul City delegation at a round table in the largest room in John’s palace. Sam would have liked to put it off, since John was in a mood even uglier than usual. One of his women had tried to kill him, or so he claimed. He had been stabbed in the side before he broke her jaw and knocked her head against the corner of a table. The woman had died an hour later still unconscious, and John’s word that she had attacked him first had to be accepted. Sam would have liked to have collected some neutral eyewitness account, but that was impossible.

John was in pain from the stab wound, half drunk with bourbon as an anesthetic, and smarting because the woman had dared to defy him. He slumped in a large, high-backed, ornately carved oak chair fitted with red hornfish leather. One hand was around a clay vessel full of whiskey, a cigarette dangled from his lips, and he glowered at everybody.

Firebrass was talking.

"Hacking once believed in total segregation of whites and nonwhites. He believed, fiercely believed, that
whites could never accept, not soul-accept, nonwhite peoples—that is, the blacks, Mongolians, Polynesians, and Amerindians. The only way nonwhites could live with dignity, feel beautiful, be a people with its own personality and pride, was to follow the way of segregation. Equal but separate.

“Then his leader, Malcolm X, quit the Black Muslims. Malcolm X saw that he was wrong. Not all whites were devils, racist fiends, any more than all blacks had flat noses. Hacking fled the States to live in Algeria and there he found that it was the attitude that made racism, not the color of the skin.”

Hardly an original or surprising discovery, Sam thought. But he had told himself that he would not interrupt.

“And then the young whites of the United States, many of them, anyway, rejected their parents’ prejudices, and they supported the blacks in their struggles. They got out on the streets and demonstrated, rioted, laid down their lives for the blacks. They genuinely seemed to like blacks, not because they thought they ought to, but because blacks were human
beings and human beings can be liked or even loved.

“Hacking, however, wasn’t ever really at ease with an American white, try though he did to think of them as human beings. He was ruined, just as most whites, most older whites, were ruined. But he tried to like those whites who were on his side and he respected those young whites that told their parents, their white racist society, to go to hell.

“Then he died, as everybody did, black or white. He found himself among ancient Chinese, and he wasn’t very happy with them because they regarded all peoples except the Chinese as inferior.”

Sam remembered the Chinese of Nevada and California in the early ’60s, the hard-working, thrifty, quiet, meek, cheery little brown men and women. They had taken abuse that most people would not give a mule, been spat upon, cursed, tortured, stoned, robbed, raped, suffered about every indignity and crime that a people could suffer. They had had no rights whatsoever, no protector or protection. And they had never murmured, never revolted, they just endured. What thoughts had those masklike faces hidden? Had
they, too, believed in the superiority of any Chinese to any white devil? If so, why had they not struck back, not once? They would have been massacred if they had, but they would have stood up like men for a few moments.

But the Chinese believed in time; time was the Chinese ally. If time did not raise a father to fortune, time would raise his son. Or his grandson.

Firebrass said, “So Hacking left in a dugout, floated down River, and after many thousands of miles settled down among some blacks of seventeenth-century A.D. Africa. Ancestors of the Zulus before they migrated to southern Africa. After a while he left them. Their customs were too repulsive, and they were too bloody-minded for him.

“Then he lived in an area where the people were a mixture of Dark Age Huns and dark whites of the New Stone Age. They accepted him well enough, but he missed his own people, the American blacks. So he took off again and was captured by ancient Moabites and enslaved, escaped, was captured by ancient Hebrews and put into grail slavery, escaped again,
found a little community of blacks who’d been pre–Civil War slaves and was happy for a while. But their Uncle Tom attitudes and their superstitions got on his nerves and he took off, sailed downRiver, and lived with several other peoples. Then, one day, some big blond whites, Nordics of some kind, raided the people he was with and he fought and was killed.

“He was resurrected here. Hacking became convinced that the only happy states on The River were going to be made up of people with similar colors, similar tastes, and of the same terrestrial period. Anything else just won’t work. People here aren’t going to change. Back on Earth he could believe in progress, because the young were flexible-minded. The old ones would die off, and then the children of the young whites would be even more free of racial prejudice. But here that just isn’t going to take place. Every man’s set in his ways. So, unless Hacking just happened to find a community of late-twentieth-century whites, he would find no whites without racial hatreds or prejudices. Of course, the ancient whites didn’t have any against blacks, but they’re too strange for a civilized man.”
Sam asked, “What’s all this leading up to, Sinjoro Firebrass?”

“We want a homogeneous nation. We can’t get all late-twentieth-century blacks, but we can get as black a nation as possible. Now, we know that you have approximately three thousand blacks in Parolando. We would like to exchange our Dravidians, Arabs, any nonblacks, for your blacks. Hacking is making similar proposals to your neighbors, but he doesn’t have any lever with them.”

King John sat up and said, loudly, “You mean he doesn’t have anything they want?”

Firebrass looked at John and said, “That’s about it. But we’ll have a lever some day.”

“Do you mean when you have enough steel weapons?” Sam said.

Firebrass shrugged.

John crashed his empty cup down on the table. “Well, we don’t want your Arabs or your Dravidians or any of your Soul City dregs!” he shouted. “But I’ll tell you what we will do! For every ton of bauxite or cryolite or ounce of platinum, we will give you one of
our black citizens! You can keep your Saracen infidels or send them packing down River or drown them for all we care.”

“Wait a minute,” Sam said. “We can’t give our citizens away. If they want to volunteer, fine. But we don’t just give anybody away. This is a democracy.”

Firebrass’ expression had darkened at John’s outburst. “I wasn’t suggesting that you give anybody away,” he said. “We’re not slave dealers, you know. What we want is a one-per-one voluntary exchange. The Wahhabi Arabs, whom ar-Rahman and Fazghuli represent, feel they’re unwelcome at Soul City and they would like to go where they could congregate in their own community, form a sort of Casbah, you might say.”

Sam thought this sounded fishy. Why couldn’t they do that just as well in Soul City? Or why didn’t they just get up and leave? One of the beauties of this world was that ties or property or dependence on income did not exist. A man could carry everything he owned on his back—and building another house was easy in a world where new bamboo grew at a rate of two inches a day.

It was possible that Hacking wanted to get his
people into Parolando so that they could spy or revolt when Hacking invaded.

Sam said, “We’ll put your proposition about the exchange to each individual. That’s all we can do. Now, does Sinjoro Hacking plan to keep on supplying us with the materials and with wood?”

“As long as you keep on sending us raw ore and steel weapons,” Firebrass said. “But Hacking is thinking of upping the price.”

John’s fist smashed into the tabletop again. “We will not be robbed!” he shouted. “We are paying too much now! Don’t push us, Sinjoro Firebrass, or you may find yourselves with nothing! Nothing at all—not even your lives!”

“Take it easy, Your Majesty,” Sam said quietly. To Firebrass he said, “John isn’t feeling well. Please forgive him. However, he does have a point. We can be pushed only so far.”

Abdullah X, a very big and very black man, jumped up and pointed a big finger at Sam. In English, he said,
“You honkies had better quit badmouthing us. We won’t take any crap from you, Mister Whitey! None! Especially from a man that wrote a book like you did about Nigger Jim! We don’t like white racists and we only deal with them because there’s nothing else we can do just now.”

“Take it easy, Abdullah,” Firebrass said. He was smiling and Sam wondered if Abdullah’s speech was the second part of a well-prepared program. Probably, Firebrass was similarly wondering if John’s explosions had been rehearsed. Actors didn’t have to be politicians, but politicians had to be actors.

Sam groaned and said, “Did you read *Huckleberry Finn*, Sinjoro X?”

Abdullah, sneering, said, “I don’t read trash.”

“Then you don’t know what you’re talking about, do you?”

Abdullah’s face darkened. Firebrass grinned.

“I don’t have to read that racist crap, man!” Abdullah shouted. “Hacking told me all about it and what he says is good enough for me!”
“You read it and then come back and we’ll discuss it,” Sam said.

“You crazy?” Abdullah said. “You know there aren’t any books on this world.”

“Then you lost out, didn’t you?” Sam said. He was trembling a little; he wasn’t used to being talked to like this by a black man. “Anyway,” Sam said, “this isn’t a literary tea-and-discussion group. Let’s stick to the issue.”

But Abdullah would not stop shouting about the books that Sam had written. And John, losing his temper, leaped up and screamed, “Silentu, negraĉo!”

John had taken the Esperanto word for “black” or “negro” and infixed the disparaging “-aĉ-” particle. He had gotten his point over quite well.

There was a moment of shock and silence. Abdullah X’s mouth was open, then it closed, and he looked triumphant, almost happy. Firebrass bit his lip. John leaned on the table on his fists and scowled. Sam puffed on his cigar. He knew that John’s contempt for all humanity had made him invent the term. John had no racial prejudice; he had never seen more than a half
dozen blacks during his lifetime on Earth. But he certainly knew how to insult a person; the knowledge was second nature to him.

“T’m walking out!” Abdullah X said. “I may be going home—and if I do you can bet your white ass that you’ll pay hell getting any more aluminum or platinum, Mister Charlie.”

Sam rose to his feet and said, “Just a minute. If you want an apology, I extend it on behalf of all Parolando.”

Abdullah looked at Firebrass, who looked away. Abdullah said, “I want an apology from him, now!”

He pointed at King John.

Sam leaned close to John and said softly, “There’s too much at stake to play the proud monarch, Your Majesty! And you may be playing into their hands with your little fit. They are up to something, you can bet on that. Apologize.”

John straightened up and said, “I apologize to no man, especially not to a commoner who is also an infidel dog!”

Sam snorted and gestured with his cigar. “Can’t you
get it through your thick Plantagenet head that there isn’t any such thing as royal blood or divine right of kings anymore, that we’re all commoners? Or all kings?”

JOHN did not reply. He walked out. Abdullah looked at Firebrass, who nodded. Abdullah walked out.

Sam said, “Well, Sinjoro Firebrass, what next? Do you people go home?”

Firebrass shook his head, “No, I don’t believe in hasty decisions. But the conference is suspended as far as the Soul City delegation is concerned. Until John Lackland apologizes. I’ll give you until noon tomorrow to decide what to do.”

Firebrass turned to leave. Sam said, “I’ll talk to John, but he’s as hardheaded as a Missouri mule.”

“I’d hate to see our negotiations fold because one man can’t keep his insults to himself,” Firebrass said. “And I’d also hate to see our trade stop, because that would mean no Riverboat for you.”

Sam said, “Don’t get me wrong, Sinjoro Firebrass.
I’m making no threats. But I won’t be stopped. I’ll get the aluminum if I have to kick John out of the country myself. Or, alternatively, if I have to go down to Soul City and get the aluminum myself.”

“I understand you,” Firebrass said. “But what you don’t understand is that Hacking isn’t out for power. He only wants to have a well-protected state so that his citizens can enjoy life. And they will enjoy their life because they’ll all have similar tastes and similar goals. In other words, they’ll all be black.”

Sam grunted and then said, “Very well.” He fell silent but just before Firebrass left, he called, “One minute. Have you read *Huckleberry Finn*?”

Firebrass turned back. “Sure. I thought it was a great book when I was a kid. I read it again when I was in college, and I could see its flaws then, but I enjoyed it even more as an adult, despite its flaws.”

“Were you disturbed because Jim was called Nigger Jim?”

“You have to remember that I was born in 1974 on a farm near Syracuse, New York. Things had changed a lot by then, and the farm had originally been owned by
my great-great-great-grandfather, who came up from Georgia to Canada via the Underground Railway and then purchased the farm after the Civil War. No, I wasn’t offended by your use of the word. Negroes were called niggers openly in the time you wrote about and nobody thought anything of it. Sure, the word was an insult. But you were portraying people as they actually talked, and the ethical basis of your novel, the struggle between Huck’s duty as a citizen and his feeling for Jim as a human being and the victory of the human feeling in Huck—I was moved. The whole book was an indictment of slavery, of the semifeudal society of the Mississippi, of superstition—of everything stupid of that time. So why should I be offended by it?”

“Then why—”

“Abdullah—whose original name was George Robert Lee—was born in 1925 and Hacking was born in 1938. Blacks were niggers then to a lot of whites, though not to all. They found out the hard way that violence—or the threat of it, the same thing that the whites had used to keep them down—was the only way to get their rights as citizens of the United States. You died in 1910, right? But you must have been told
Sam nodded. “It’s hard to believe. Not the violence of the riots. Plenty of that happened in my lifetime and nothing, I understand, ever equaled the Draft Act riots in New York City during the Civil War. I mean, what’s hard to visualize is the licentiousness of the late twentieth century.”

Firebrass laughed and said, “Yet you’re living in a society that is far more free and licentious—from the viewpoint of the nineteenth century—than any society in the twentieth. You’ve adapted.”

“I suppose so,” Sam replied. “But the two weeks of absolute nudity during the first days after resurrection ensured that mankind would never again be the same. Not as regards nudity, anyway. And the undeniable fact of the resurrection shattered many fixed ideas and attitudes. Though the diehard is still with us, as witness your Wahhabi Moslem.”

“Tell me, Sinjoro Clemens,” Firebrass said. “You were an early liberal, far ahead of your time in many things. You spoke up against slavery and were for
equality. And when you wrote the Magna Carta for Parolando you insisted that there should be political equality for all species, races, and both sexes. I notice that a black man and a white woman live almost next door to you. Be honest, doesn’t it disturb you to see that?”

Sam drew in smoke, blew it out, and said, “To be honest, yes, it did disturb me. Well, to tell the truth, it almost killed me! What my mind told me and what my reflexes told me were two different things. I hated it. But I stuck to my guns, I said nothing, I became acquainted with that couple and I learned to like them. And now, after a year, it bothers me only a very little. And that will go away in time.”

“The difference between you—representing the white liberal—and the youth of Hacking’s day and mine was that we were not bothered. We accepted it.”

“Don’t I get any credit for lifting myself by my mental bootstraps?” Sam asked.

“Yawblaw,” Firebrass said, lapsing into English—of a sort. “Two degrees off is better than ninety. Pin it.”
He went out. Sam was left alone. He sat for a long while, then stood up and went outside. The first person he saw was Hermann Göring. His head was still wrapped in a towel, but his skin was less pale, and his eyes did not look odd.

Sam said, “How’s your head?”

“It still hurts. But I walk without driving hot spikes in it every time I take a step.”

“I don’t like to see a man suffer,” Sam said. “So I suggest that you could avoid more suffering, if not downright pain, by leaving Parolando.”

“Are you threatening me?”

“Not with any action from me. But there are plenty who may get so riled up they’ll run you out on a rail. Or take you down to The River and drown you. You’re upsetting everybody with your preachings. This state was founded with one main goal, the building of the Riverboat. Now, a man may say anything he wants to and not run foul of the law here. But there are those who sometimes ignore the law, and I wouldn’t want to have to punish them because you tempted them. I suggest that you do your Christian duty and remove
yourself from the premises. That way, you won’t be tempting good men and women to commit violence.”

“I’m not a Christian,” Göring said.

“I admire a man who can admit that. I don’t think I ever met a preacher who came out and said so, in so many words.”

“Sinjoro Clemens,” Göring said, “I read your books when I was a young man in Germany, first in German and then in English. But levity or mild irony isn’t going to get us anywhere. I am not a Christian, though I try to practice the better Christian virtues. I am a missionary of the Church of the Second Chance. All terrestrial religions have been discredited, even if some won’t admit it. The Church is the first religion to rise on the new world, the only one which has any chance to survive. It—”

“Spare me the lecture,” Sam said. “I’ve heard enough from your predecessors and from you. What I’m saying, in utter friendliness and a desire to save you from harm and also, to be honest, to get you out of my craw, is that you should take off. Right now. Or you’ll be killed.”
“Then I’ll rise at dawn tomorrow somewhere else and preach The Truth there, wherever I find myself. You see, here, as on Earth, the blood of the martyr is the seed of the Church. The man who kills one of us only ensures that The Truth, the chance for eternal salvation, will be heard by more people. Murder has spread our faith up and down The River far faster than any conventional means of travel.”

“Congratulations,” Sam said exasperatedly, dropping into English, as he often did when angry. “But tell me, doesn’t the repeated killing of your missionaries bother you? Aren’t you afraid of running out of body?”

“What do you mean?”

“Tenets, anyone?”

Sam got no reaction except a puzzled look. Sam resumed in Esperanto. “One of your major tenets, if I remember correctly, is that man wasn’t resurrected so he could enjoy life here forever. He is given only a limited time, though it may look like a long time to most, especially if they don’t happen to be enjoying life here. You postulate something analogous to a soul, something you call a psychomorph, right? Or sometimes a ka. 
You have to, otherwise you can’t claim a continuity of identity in a man. Without it a man who dies is dead, even if his body is reproduced exactly and made alive again. That second body is only a reproduction. The lazarus has the mind and the memories of the man who died, so he thinks he’s the man who died. But he isn’t. He’s just a living duplicate. Death terminated the first man. He’s through.

“But you solve this problem by postulating a soul—or a psychomorph or a ka—call it what you will. This is an entity which is born with the body, accompanies it, registers and records everything the body does, and, indeed, must be an incorporeal incorporation of the body, if you’ll excuse that contradiction. So that, when the flesh dies, the ka still exists. It exists in some fourth dimension or in some polarization which protoplastic eyes can’t see or mechanical devices can’t detect. Is that correct?”

“You’re close enough,” Göring said. “Crudely put but satisfactory.”

“So far,” Sam said, expelling a big cloud of green smoke, “we have—you have, not I—the postulated
soul of the Christians and the Moslems and others *ad nauseam*. But you claim that the soul does not go to a hell or a heaven. It flits around in some sort of fourth-dimensional limbo. It would do so forever if it were not for the interference of other beings. These are extraterrestrials who came into existence long before humanity did. These superbeings came to Earth when mankind did not yet exist—in fact, they visited every planet in the universe that might have sentient life some day."

"You’re not phrasing it exactly as we do," Göring said. "We maintain that every galaxy has one—or perhaps many—ancient species inhabiting certain planets. These beings may have arisen in our galaxy or they may have originated in an earlier, now dead, galaxy or universe. In any event, they are wise and knew long ago that sentient life would arise on Earth, and they set up devices which started recording these sentients from the moment they appeared. These devices are undetectable by the sentients.

"At some time which these Ancients, as we call them, have determined, the recordings are sent to a special place. There the dead are fleshed out from the
recordings by energy-matter converters, made whole and young again, and then recordings are made of these bodies—which are destroyed and the dead are raised on a new world, such as this, again through e-m conversion.

“The psychomorphs, or *kas*, have an affinity to their protoplasmic twins. The moment a duplicate of the dead body is made, the *ka* attaches itself and begins recording. So that, if the body is killed and duplicated a hundred times, the *ka* still retains the identity, the mind, and the memories of all the bodies. So that it is not just one duplicate after another being created. It is a matter of preservation of the pristine individual with a recording of everything that ever occurred to the immediate environment of all the protoplasmic bodies of the *ka*.”

“But!” Sam said, waving his cigar and then stabbing its glowing end close to Göring’s cheek. “But! You maintain that a man cannot be killed an indefinite number of times. You say that, after a couple of hundred times, death does have a final effect. Continued dying weakens the link between body and *ka* and eventually the duplication of the body does not cause the *ka* to merge with it. The *ka* wanders off, haunts the
spooky corridors of the fourth dimension, or whatever. It becomes, in effect, a ghost, a lost soul. It is done for.”

“That is the essence of our faith,” Göring said. “Or I should say our knowledge, since we know this to be true.”

Sam raised his bushy eyebrows. “Indeed? Know?”

“Yes. Our founder heard The Truth a year after Resurrection, a year to the day after all of humanity rose from the dead. A man came to him at night as he prayed for a revelation on a high ledge up in the mountains. This man told him certain things, showed him certain things, that no terrestrial mortal could tell or show. This man was an agent of The Ancients and he revealed The Truth, and he told our founder to go out and preach the doctrine of the Second Chance.

“Actually, the term Second Chance is a misnomer. It is really our First Chance, because we never had a chance for salvation and eternal life while we were on Earth. But life on Earth was a necessary prelude to this Riverworld. The Creator made the universe and then The Ancients preserved humankind—indeed, all sentients throughout the universe. They preserved! But
salvation is up to mankind only!

“It is up to each man to save himself, now that he has been given the chance!”

“Through the Church of the Second Chance and that only, I suppose,” Sam said. He did not want to sneer but he could not help himself.

“That is what we believe,” Göring said.

“What were the credentials of this mysterious stranger?” Sam said. He thought of his Mysterious Stranger, and he felt panic. Could the two be the same? Or could both be from the same beings who called themselves the Ethicals? His Stranger, the man who sent the nickel-iron meteorite here and who had enabled Joe Miller to see the Tower in the far-off misty North Polar Sea, was a renegade of the Ethicals. If he were to be believed.

“Credentials?” Göring said. “Papers from God?”

He laughed.

“The founder knew that his visitor could not be just a man because he knew things that only a god, or a
superior being, could know about him. And he showed him some things that he had to believe. And he told him how we were brought back to life and why. He did not tell him everything. Some things will be revealed later. Some things we must find out for ourselves.”

“What is the name of this founder?” Sam said. “Or don’t you know? Is that one of the hidden things?”

“No one knows,” Göring said. “It is not necessary to know. What is a name? He only called himself Viro. That is, in Esperanto, a man. From the Latin *vir*. We call him La Fondinto, The Founder, or La Viro, The Man.”

“Did you ever meet him?”

“No, but I have met two who knew him well. One was there when La Viro preached the first time, seven days after the Stranger had talked to him.”

“La Viro is definitely male? Not a woman?”

“Oh, yes!”

Sam sighed deeply and said, “That’s a great weight off my mind. If the founder had turned out to be Mary Baker Eddy, I would have curled up and died.”
“What?”

“Never mind,” Sam said, grinning. “I wrote a book about her once. I wouldn’t want to meet her; she’d scalp me alive. But some of the wild mystical things you told me reminded me of her.”

“Except for the ka, everything in our explanation is based on the physical. And the ka is physical, but at right angles, you might say, to our reality. We believe that it is science, the science of The Ancients, which has given us a physical resurrection. There’s nothing supernatural about anything, except our belief in The Creator, of course. The rest is all science.”

“Like Mary Baker Eddy’s religion?” Sam asked.

“I do not know of her.”

“So how do we attain this salvation?”

“By becoming love. And that implies, of course, that we do not offer violence, even in self-defense. We believe that we can become love only by attaining a certain transcendent state and that comes through self-knowledge. So far most of mankind has not learned how to use dreamgum; man has abused the drug, just as he abuses everything.”
“And you think you have become love, whatever that phrase means?”

“Not yet. But I am on the way.”

“Through dreamgum?”

“Not just with it. It helps. But you have to act, too, you have to preach and suffer for your belief. And learn not to hate. Learn to love.”

“So that is why you oppose my Riverboat? You think that we are wasting our time by building it?”

“It’s a goal that will bring no one any good. So far it has resulted in the devastation of the land, in greed and pain and bloodshed, in anxiety and treachery. In hate, hate, hate! And for what? So you can have what nobody else has, a giant boat of metal propelled by electricity, the apex of the technology this planet offers, a ship of fools. So you can journey to the headwaters of The River. When you get there, then what? You should be journeying to the headwaters of the soul!”

“There are some things you don’t know,” Sam said. His smugness was soured by a vision. There was a devil, crouching in the darkness, whispering in his ear. But someone had crouched in the darkness and
whispered in the ear of the founder of the Church, too. Was the Church’s Stranger the devil? The being who had come to Samuel Clemens had said that the others were the devils and he wanted to save mankind.

The devil would say something like that, of course.

“Don’t my words touch your heart at all?” Göring said.

Sam rapped his chest with his fist and said, “Yes, I do believe I have a touch of indigestion.”

Göring made a fist and clamped his lips.

“Watch out, you’ll lose your love,” Sam said and walked away. But he did not feel particularly triumphant. It was a fact that he did have a little stomach upset. Invincible ignorance always upset him, even though he knew he should just laugh at it.
The afternoon of the next day arrived. Sam Clemens and John Lackland had been arguing all morning. Finally Sam, exasperated past caution and reasonableness, said, “We can’t afford to have the bauxite cut off by Hacking! We can’t afford anything that will put a stop to building the Riverboat! Maybe you’re doing this to force a war between us and Soul City! It isn’t going to work, Your Majesty!”

Sam had been walking back and forth, waving a panatela as he spoke. John sprawled before the oaken round table in Sam’s pilothouse. Joe Miller sat in a corner on a big chair specially built for him. The massive paleolithic Mongolian, Zaksksromb, stood behind John.

Suddenly, Sam whirled and planked both fists on the table. Leaning on the table, his cigar in one corner of his mouth, the reddish tangle of his eyebrows drawn down, he snarled at John.

“You gave in once, at Runnymede, when you signed
the Magna Carta. It was about the only decent thing you ever did during your reign—and there are some who say you had your fingers crossed then. Well, this is another showdown, John, Your Majesty. You apologize to Abdullah, who has a right to an apology—or I’ll call a special session of the Council and we’ll determine your fitness to continue as co-Consul!”

John glowered at him for a full minute at the least. Then he said, “Your threats don’t scare me. But it’s evident that you would sooner plunge our land into civil war than go to war with Soul City. I do not understand this madness, but then a rational man always has trouble understanding irrationality. So I will apologize. Why not! A king can afford to be gracious to a commoner. It costs him nothing and enhances his graciousness.”

John rose and swaggered out, his huge bodyguard behind him.

Ten minutes later, Sam heard that John had appeared at the state guest house and offered his apology. Abdullah X accepted it, though sullenly. It was evident that he had been ordered to do so.

Just before the factory whistles announced the end of
lunch hour, Cawber entered. He sat down without waiting for Sam to invite him. Sam raised his eyebrows, because this was the first time that this had happened. There was something indefinable in Cawber’s attitude. Sam, watching him carefully, listening to every inflection of his voice, decided that his attitude was that of a slave who has decided to be a slave no more.

Cawber knew that he would be the emissary to Soul City. He sat leaning forward, huge black arms resting on the oak, his hands spread out. He spoke in Esperanto and, like many people, mostly in the present tense, using an adverb of time to indicate future or past if he wanted to clarify.

Cawber’s team had talked to every one of the approximately three thousand undoubted Negroes (there was some confusion of classification about some of the prehistorics). A third of these were willing, though not eager, to go to Soul City in exchange for Hacking’s unwanted citizens. Most were late-twentieth-century blacks. The others maintained that they had work that gave them prestige, that they liked being on an equal
footing with the whites, and that they did not want to give up their chance to be on the Riverboat.

The latter was probably the biggest determinant, Sam thought. He was not the only one who dreamed of the Riverboat. It drove through the minds of many during sleep, gleaming like a jewel with a firefly trapped inside.

Firebrass and his people were requested to come to the conference room. Firebrass was late because he had been inspecting the airplane. He was laughing about its quaintness, fragility, and slowness, and yet he was envious that von Richthofen would be the one to fly it.

“You’ll certainly get a chance to fly it, too,” Sam said. “Provided that you are still here, of course, when —”

Firebrass became serious. “What is your decision, gentlemen, regarding my government’s proposals?”

Sam looked at John, who gestured that Sam had the floor. John intended that any possible ill feelings should first be directed at Sam.

“This is a democracy,” Sam said. “And we can’t tell our citizens to get out unless they’ve been guilty of illegal behavior. So, as I see it—as we see it—any
citizen of Parolando may go to Soul City if he wishes. I think we actually reached basic agreement on this when we last met. It will be up to your government to negotiate with each citizen. As for taking in your Arabs and Dravidians and so forth—we’ll give them a chance to come with us if they want to. But we reserve the right to get rid of them if they don’t work out. Where they’ll go then is up to them.”

“Well,” Firebrass said, “I don’t suppose Hacking wants anybody who isn’t willing to live in Soul City, no matter how black that person is.”

“What about the shipments of minerals?” Sam said. “Will those be discontinued during the negotiations?”

“I really couldn’t say,” Firebrass replied. “I doubt it, but I’d have to confer with Hacking. Of course, you’ll have to keep up your present rate of ore and weapons to us before the price is raised.”

“I notice you said is, not might be,” Sam said.

“Anything I say is subject to confirmation or negation from Soul City,” Firebrass said, smiling.

It was then agreed that Cawber would go to Soul City as Parolando’s ambassador if the Carta could be
changed to arrange it. Everything else was still up in the air. Sam Clemens received the impression that Firebrass did not intend to speed things up. Quite the contrary. He was willing to let things drag on or even to put his own foot on the brake if things showed signs of accelerating. He wanted to remain in Parolando, and Sam could only think that he wished to do so in order to spy. Perhaps, he also wanted to stir up trouble.

Later, he discussed the meeting with John. John agreed that Firebrass was a spy, but he could not see why Firebrass would stir up trouble.

"He would want the boat to be built as swiftly as possible. The sooner it’s completed, the sooner Hacking will try to seize it. Do you think for one moment that Hacking doesn’t intend to get the boat? Do you think for one moment that we have a single neighbor who doesn’t intend to try for the boat? Arthur made the abortive attempt to take us over because of his hatred for me. He should have waited until the boat was nearly completed and then, with Kleomenes and the Ulmaks, launched all the force they could mount in an all-out attack. As things worked out, he and Kleomenes were killed and Iyeyasu has invaded their
countries while their successors are fighting among themselves.”

“According to our spies, he’s winning, too,” Sam said.

“If he consolidates his state with the other two, then he’ll be a very formidable enemy.”

And so will you be, John Lackland, Sam thought. Of all the people I’ll have to watch after the boat is built, you’ll bear the closest watching. ...

Firebrass announced that he and his delegation would remain as Soul City’s embassy while the negotiations went on.

“It’s nice to have you,” Sam said. “But Soul City has its own industries. I know it’s been using our ore to make weapons and several things our spies can’t find out about.”

Firebrass looked surprised and then he laughed uproariously. “You twist my stick, stymate!” he said in English. Then, in Esperanto, “Well, why shouldn’t we be frank? I like that. Yes, we know you have spies
among us—just as you know we have ours here. Who doesn’t have his spies in his neighbors’ lands? But what are you getting at?”

“You’re the most technically trained man Hacking has. You’re a Ph.D. You’re in charge of the factories and of research and development. So why does Hacking send you here when he needs you there?”

“I’ve set everything up to run smoothly. Soul City doesn’t need me right now, and I was bored. I wanted to come here, where it’s at.”

“So you can see what we’ve got, like our Mark I handguns and our airplane and the amphibian and its steam cannon?”

Firebrass grinned and nodded. “Yes. Why not? If I don’t see these things, someone else will.”

Sam relaxed. He said, “Have a cigar. You can look all you want. We’re not doing anything you wouldn’t have figured out for yourself, except for the steam cannon maybe. That, by the way, is my invention. Come along with me. I’m very proud of it and want you to see it. It’s almost finished.”

_Firedragon I_ rested inside its supporting framework
of timbers. It was silvery gray and shaped like a flat-bottomed boat but had seven huge metal wheels with plastic tires on each side. Twin screws protected by a screen protruded from its rear. Its length was thirty feet, its beam was ten feet, and its height was twelve feet. Three turrets stuck out from the upper deck. One held the pilot, captain, and radio operator, though at the moment Parolando had no radios. The center turret was higher than the others, and the barrel of a short stubby weapon encased in wood projected from it. The rear turret was designed for gunners who would be armed with Mark I handguns and perhaps rifles.

"The amphibian burns wood alcohol to generate steam," Sam said. "Let’s go inside, through this hatch in the side here. You’ll notice that the boiler takes up about a third of the interior. There’s a good reason for that, as you’ll see."

They climbed up a ladder into the inside of the center turret, which was lit by a single lightbulb. Firebrass exclaimed at this. It was the only electric lightbulb he had ever seen on The River. Sam explained that it was powered by a fuel cell.
“And here is the Super-duper Steam Machine Cannon,” he said. He pointed at the cylinder sticking out of the gray bulkhead of the turret. Underneath it were a pistollike butt and a trigger. Firebrass got behind it, put his finger on the trigger, and looked out through the opening above the barrel. He raised and lowered the weapon.

“There’ll be a chair for the operator to sit in,” Sam said. “He’ll be able to rotate the turret any way he wants by pushing pedals. He can depress the gun about twenty degrees up or down. The steam from the boiler is the motive power for the eighty-caliber plastic bullets. The gun is fired from an open breech—that is, there’s no bullet in the barrel when the trigger is pulled. Pulling the trigger releases a catch which permits the breech block to move forward, impelled by a spring. During its forward travel, the breech block picks up a plastic bullet from the clip and pushes it into the breech. Just before the block reaches the breech, the camming lugs on either side engage in their slots and turn the breech block a quarter turn to the right, thus locking the breech. You follow me?”

Firebrass nodded.
“Good. As soon as the quarter turn is completed, the inlet channel in the breech block comes into line with the feed channel from the high-pressure steam line. This allows hot, say approximately four-hundred-degree Fahrenheit, steam to enter the chamber in the breech block. The plastic cartridge is forced through the barrel by the expansion of steam. At the same time the steam pressure, acting against the rear of the chamber, begins to force the breech block back. Because of the greater weight of the block, however, the block doesn’t begin to move until the bullet has already cleared the muzzle of the rifle.

“As the block begins to move backward, the camming lugs move in the camming slots and turn the bolt a quarter turn to the left, thus shutting off the steam. Then the breech block returns to its original position. If the trigger is still held back, the operation is repeated indefinitely.”

Firebrass said, “I’m impressed. But won’t the gun operate most efficiently if its temperature is the same as the incoming high-pressure steam? That way, less of the steam’s energy would be used to heat the gun and this means more steam to propel the bullet. Ah, I see! You
do have a hollow jacket around the barrel. The steam travels through that before it enters the weapon itself, right?”

“Yes. There’s an insulating jacket of plaster encased in wood. Note that bleeder valve. It permits the gun to be heated up before use—a few seconds before it’s fired. If that isn’t done, the gun might jam. And since the gun’s maximum temperature is the same as the steam in the boiler, there’s no danger of burning up the barrel. You can use the gun like a fire hose. In fact, that’ll be about the only way it’ll be effective. The accuracy of a light plastic bullet with such comparatively low muzzle velocity isn’t high.”

FIREBRASS was far from being depressed because of the military superiority the amphibian would give Parolando. This probably was because he was planning on building one for Soul City. Or, if Parolando had one, then perhaps he might build two. In which case, Parolando would have to build three.

Soul City could not outbuild Parolando. But Parolando could not cut the supplies off because then
Soul City would cut off the bauxite, cryolite, platinum, and iridium.

The exhilaration from showing off his deadly invention whistled out almost audibly from Sam. The only solution to the problem, if Soul City did start a weapons race, would be to smash Soul City and take direct control of the minerals. This meant putting off the building of the Riverboat. And it also meant offending the two states, Publiujo and Tifonujo, that lay between Parolando and Soul City. And if those two states got together, they would be formidable, what with the weapons that Parolando had to give them in exchange for their wood.

Sam had thought that that potentiality was bad enough. But a few days later Iyeyasu completed his conquest of his neighboring states and sent a mission to Parolando. He made no demands that could not be met. In fact, in one way his proposals were helpful. He said that his nation had lost enough trees, and he would like to give them a chance to grow again—but for an increase in the number of weapons from Parolando, he was willing to provide a large quantity of wood and of excrement for their gunpowder industry. He would
invade the territories across The River and take their wood from them.

What it amounted to was that Parolando would be paying Iyeyasu to collect the wood forcibly from its neighbors. It would be cheaper and also a lot less painful for the Parolandanoj, who would not have to do their own killing, enslaving, or raiding.

And Sam Clemens would have one more thing to rob him of sleep.

John Lackland thought the proposal excellent. “Our factories are turning out weapons efficiently,” he said. “We can afford to export more. And we must build a fleet of Firedragons so that the swords we give these people will be easily overpowered by our machines.”

“When are we going to start building the Riverboat?” Sam asked.

No one gave him an answer, but the next day van Boom, Velitsky, and O’Brien, his chief engineers, brought him the first rough overall sketches. They were drawn in black on white plastic boards with a pencil
connected to a fuel cell. The magnetic field at the tip of
the pencil rearranged the loose and very thin covering of
particles within its range. The lines remained polarized
until a reverse field was passed over them. Thus, the
demand for paper for drawings was greatly cut down,
and the plans could be changed as desired.

Firebrass said he would like to help build the boat.
Permission was given, though John objected at first.
Sam replied that the more help they had, the faster the
work would move. And he did not see how any amount
of knowledge on Firebrass’ part would enable him to
steal the boat. Though Sam did not tell John, he had an
idea about Firebrass. That was to get him so involved,
so “het up” about the boat, that he would take an offer
of a berth on the vessel.

The machinery necessary to roll out the first plates
for the hull was almost finished. The dam had been
finished a week ago, and the water from the cataract
was filling it up. The aluminum wires of the generators,
which would be turned by the waterfall from the dam,
were being wound. The prototype batacitor, which
would be four stories high, would be finished in a
month, if enough materials were available.
Five hundred missionaries of the Church of the Second Chance asked for sanctuary in Parolando a few days later. Iyeyasu had kicked them out of his new state, promising various exquisite tortures if they tried to sneak back. Sam did not hear about them immediately because he was up at the dam.

The Chancers refused to go when John sent word to them to leave immediately. John Lackland, hearing this, smiled grimly, tugged at his lion-colored hair, and swore his favorite oath, “By the teeth of God!”

Sam was at the dam to supervise the installation of tons of dynamite inside the hollow walls. This was to be one more trick up his sleeve, a last-ditch operation—and perhaps a suicidal one—if ever an enemy were about to make a successful invasion.

Von Richthofen, red-faced and blowing hard from his run up the hill, told him of the arrival of the Chancers and their refusal to move. He did not mention John.

Sam told Lothar to tell the Chancers that he would be down in the evening. They could wait for him but were not to move outside a radius of twenty yards from the grailstone near which they had landed. For a
moment, he considered ordering them to leave at once and telling the soldiers that they could pound them a little with the flats of their swords if they wished. He was hot and sweating and covered with cement dust, and he felt an especial animosity toward the Chancers. Here was a world blessed by the absence of flies and mosquitoes—and humans, the Chancers, were trying to fill the gap.

The rumbling and splash of giant mortars pouring out concrete, the yells of the straw bosses, and the scraping of shovels and clatter of iron wooden-wheeled barrows kept Sam from hearing the explosions that came a half hour later. He knew nothing of what had happened until von Richthofen came running toward him again.

Sam felt as if he would come loose at the joints and slump into a puddle. John had tested out the new guns on the Chancers. A hundred Mark I flintlocks had killed almost five hundred men and women in three minutes. John himself had fired and loaded ten times, using the last five bullets to finish off the wounded.

About thirty women, the most beautiful, had been spared. These had been taken to John’s palace.
Long before he reached the water’s edge, Sam saw the big crowd gathered around the grailstone. He sent Lothar ahead of him to clear the way. The crowd parted before them, like the Red Sea before Moses, he thought, but the Red Sea was before him after he got through the parting. The bodies were piled against each other, covered with blood, their flesh torn, bones shattered by the big-caliber bullets. In his ninety-seven years of life Sam had never grown accustomed to the silence of the dead. It seemed to hang over them like an invisible and chilling cloud. The mouth that would not speak again, the brain that could not think...

It did no good to remember that tomorrow these same people, in fresh and healthy bodies, would be up and doing somewhere along the banks. The effect of death could not be diluted with intellectualizing.

John was issuing orders about the disposal of the bodies to the soap and skin factories. He grinned at Sam like a bad boy caught pulling the cat’s tail.

“This is a massacre!” Sam shouted. “A massacre! Unjustified! Unforgivable! There was no reason for it, you bloody-minded killing beast! That’s all you ever
have been, you murdering dog, all you ever will be! Swine! Swine! Swine!"

John lost his smile and took a step back as Sam, his hands clenched, moved close to him. The huge massive-boned Zaksksromb, holding a big club of oak with steel spikes set in its end, started toward Sam.

Lothar von Richthofen shouted, “None of that—leave him alone or I call Joe Miller! And I’ll shoot the first man who makes a move toward Sam.”

Sam looked behind him. Lothar was holding a big pistol in his hands, and it was pointed at John.

John’s dark skin paled, and his eyes opened wide. Even the light-blue irises seemed to become paler.

Later Sam wished that he had told Lothar to fire. Even though the hundred pistoleers were John’s men, they might have hesitated if John had been killed at the first shot. They were surrounded by armed men and women, most of whom were not fond of John and almost all of whom were shocked by the slaughter. They might have withheld their fire. Even if they had not, Sam could have thrown himself down to the ground and the first shots might have missed. After that, who knew
what would have happened?

But it was no good fantasizing. He had not given the order.

Nevertheless, he had to take some strong and immediate action. If he let John get away with this, he would lose everybody’s respect, not to mention his own. And he might as well resign his Consulship. In which case, he would lose the Riverboat.

He turned his head slightly, though not so much that he could not keep an eye on John. He saw Livy’s white face and big dark eyes; she looked as if she were going to vomit. He ignored her and called to Cyrano de Bergerac, who was standing on the edge of the inner circle, his long rapier in his hand.

“Captain de Bergerac!” Sam pointed at John. “Arrest the co-Consul.”

John was holding a pistol in one hand, but he did not bring up its muzzle.

He said in a mild voice, “I protest. I told them to get out at once and they refused to go. I warned them and
they still refused—so I ordered them shot. What difference does it make, really? They will be alive tomorrow."

Cyrano marched straight to John, stopped, saluted, and said, “Your weapons, sire.”

Zaksksromb growled and lifted his spiked club.

“No, Zak,” John Lackland said. “According to the Carta, one Consul can arrest the other if he thinks the other is acting contrary to the Carta. I won’t be under arrest long.”

He handed Cyrano his gun, butt first, unbuckled his belt, and gave it to Cyrano. Its sheaths held a long knife and short sword.

“I will return to my palace while you and the Council decide my fate,” he said. “According to the Carta, you must convene within an hour after the arrest and have a decision in two hours, as long as no national emergency interferes.”

He walked away, Cyrano behind him. John’s men hesitated a moment and then, at the thundered orders of Zaksksromb, followed John to the palace. Sam stared after them. He had expected more resistance. And then
it occurred to him that John knew very well that Sam Clemens had to do just what he did or lose face. And John knew Sam well enough to know that Sam might want to avoid a decision that could lead to civil war, but he would not if he thought his Riverboat endangered.

So John had gone along with him. John did not want to force a showdown. Not now. He had satisfied his bloodlust for the moment. The Councilmen would meet and find that, legally, John was within his rights. Morally, he was not. But then his supporters would argue that even there he was justified. After all, the dead would be alive again and the lesson to the Second Chancers would be invaluable. They would steer clear of Parolando for a long time. And surely Sam Clemens would have to admit that this was desirable. If the Chancers continued to make converts, the Riverboat would never be built. Moreover, other states, less weakened with the Chancer philosophy, would invade Parolando.

And he, Sam Clemens, would say that next John’s supporters would be claiming that it was all right to torture people. After all, the pain could last only so long, and any injury would be healed just by killing the
victim. Then rape would be justified, because, after all, the woman wasn’t going to be made pregnant or diseased—and if she got hurt, too bad. Kill her and she’d be all right in the morning. Never mind the mental damage. A little dreamgum would cure that.

No, Sam would say, it’s a question not of murder, but of rights. If you killed a man, you removed him without his consent to a place so far away he could walk a thousand years along the Riverbank and never get back. You took him away from his love, his friends, his home. Force was force and it was always…

Oh, oh! He’d better watch himself!

“Sam!” a lovely voice said.

He turned. Livy was pale, but her eyes looked as if they were normal.

“Sam! What about the women he carried off?”

“Where’s my head?” he said aloud. “Come on, Lothar!” Seeing the ten-foot-high Miller halfway across the plain, he waved at him and the titanthrop turned to intercept them. Lothar ordered a hundred archers who had just arrived to follow them.
Near the great log building, he slowed down. John knew that his co-Consul had forgotten about the abducted women, but that he would soon remember them. And John might be prepared to submit himself to the Council’s judgment of the massacre, because, legally, he was within his rights. But surrendering the women to Sam might be just a little too much for John. His infamous temper might betray him, and then civil war would explode in Parolando.
Sam saw thirty or so women walking out through the open gates, and he knew that John had decided to rectify his mistake. Even so, he could be accused of kidnapping, a graver crime than murder in this topsyturvy world. But if the women were unharmed, it would be too much trouble to push the charge.

He stopped, and this time he thought his heart would stop. Gwenafra was with the women!

Lothar, crying her name, ran to her. She ran to him with her arms out, and they embraced.

After a minute of hugging, kissing, and sobbing, she pulled herself away and went to Sam. He cursed himself because there was no one else he could reasonably blame. If he had shown that he wanted her when she had made it plain that he could have her, then she might not have turned to von Richthofen. Why hadn’t he taken her, then? Why had he clung to the idea that Livy would eventually come back and that, if he took
another woman now, Livy would resent it so much she would never have anything to do with him?

His thinking wasn’t logical. But whatever the philosophers claimed, the main use of logic was to justify your emotions.

Gwenafra had kissed him while her tears ran down his bare chest. Now she left his arms and went back to Lothar, and Sam Clemens was left with the problem of what to do with—or to—John Lackland.

He strode through the gates with Joe Miller lumbering behind him. A moment later, von Richthofen had caught up with him. He was swearing and muttering in German, “I’ll kill him!”

Sam stopped. “You get out of here! I’m mad enough, but I can control myself! You’re in the lion’s den now, and if you try anything, he can have you killed and claim self-defense. He’d love that. In fact, he may have done all this just to set up our murder.”

Lothar said, “But you’re here with only Joe!”

“I wouldn’t ever call Joe an only! Anyway, if you hadn’t been so busy mugging with Gwen, you would have heard me order the troops to storm the palace and
kill everybody in it if I’m not out in fifteen minutes.”

Lothar stared at Sam. “You’ve certainly gotten much more aggressive!”

“The more trouble I have and the longer the building of the Riverboat takes, the meaner I get,” Sam said. There was no point in telling him that his anger at him and Gwenafra was turned onto John, who already had so much directed at him that he should have curled up and crisped away. And would have if there were any justice in the world.

He entered the largest building inside the stockade of tall lodgepole-pine logs and he brushed past Sharkey. The slope-shouldered thug started to block his way, but Sam did not break his stride. A cavernous growl came from the vast hairy figure behind Sam. Sharkey snarled soundlessly and made the mistake of not moving to one side far enough. A huge reddish-haired hip sent the two-hundred-and-thirty-pound man staggering back as if he were a hollow dummy.

“I’ll kill you one of these days!” Sharkey said in English.

Joe turned his head slowly as if it were a turret on a
battleship and the tremendous proboscis were a cannon. “Yeth? You and what army?”

“You’re getting pretty snappy with the comeback, Joe,” Sam muttered. “My influence, no doubt.”

“I’m not as dumb as most people think,” Joe said. “That wouldn’t be possible.”

His rage had become a dull red now. Even with Joe as his bodyguard, he was far from being safe. But he was banking that John would go only so far with him, because he wanted that boat, too.

John was sitting at the big round oaken table with a dozen of his thugs. The giant Zaksksromb was standing behind him. All held clay steins. The room reeked of tobacco and liquor. John’s eyes were red, but then they usually were. Light came in through the windows but the direct sunlight was blocked off by the stockade poles. Some pine torches burned smokily.

Sam stopped, took a cigar out of the little box in the bag hanging from his belt, and lit it. It angered him that his hand shook so much, and that increased his anger at John.
He said, “All right, Your Majesty! It was bad enough that you took those alien women for your own vile purposes! But to take Gwenafra? She’s a citizen of this state! You really put your neck in the noose, John, and I’m not just using figurative language!”

John downed the whiskey in the stein and gently put it down on the table. Softly, he said, “I had those women removed for their own safety. The crowd was very ugly; they wanted to kill the missionaries. And Gwenafra was taken along through a mistake. I will ascertain who is responsible for that and punish him.”

“John,” Sam said, “I ought to arrest your assertions for vagrancy. They certainly are without any visible support. But I got to hand it to you. You just dispossessed the devil. You are now the father of lies and grand master, past, present, and future, of deceit. If being barefaced is the criterion of the greatest liar, all other liars are whiskered like Santa Claus.”


John blew out a deep breath and said, smiling, “You are upset over a little blood. You will get over it. You
cannot disprove anything I have said, isn’t that right? By the way, have you called a meeting of the Council yet? The law of the land requires you to do so, you know.”

The horrible thing was that John would get away with it. Everybody, including his supporters, would know he was lying. But there was nothing to do about it unless they wanted to start a civil war, and that would mean that the wolves—Iyeyasu, Hacking, maybe the supposed neutrals, Publius Crassus, Chernsky, Tai Fung, and the savages across The River—would invade.

Sam snorted and walked out. Two hours later, his expectations were realities. The Councilmen voted an official reprimand against John for his mishandling of the situation and his hastiness. He was directed to confer with his co-Consul in any such future situations.

No doubt John would laugh uproariously when he was told of the decision and he would call for more liquor, tobacco, marijuana, and women to celebrate.

However, he did not have a complete victory. Every Parolandano knew how Sam Clemens had stood up to John, stormed his palace with only one supporter,
released the women, and insulted John to his face. John knew that; his triumph was standing on shaky legs.

Sam asked the Council to exile every Second Chancer in Parolando for their own protection. But several Councillors pointed out that this would be illegal. The Carta would have to be changed. Besides, it was unlikely that John would take any more action against them after the warning he had received.

They knew as well as Sam why he was taking advantage of the emotional climate to oust the Second Chancers. But there were some stubborn men on the Council. Perhaps they felt angry because they had not been able to do anything about John, and at least they could make a stand for principle in this case.

Sam would have bet that the survivors of the massacre would want to leave immediately. But they insisted on staying. The slaughter had done nothing except to convince them that Parolando needed them very much. Göring was building several large huts for them. Sam sent word down that this should stop. Parolando was already short of wood. Göring sent word back that he and his male comrades would move
out and sleep under the grailstones. Sam swore and blew smoke in the face of the Chancer messenger and said that it was too bad pneumonia did not exist. Afterward, he felt ashamed, but he did not relent. He wasn’t going to scant his furnaces so that people he did not even want could sleep under a roof.

He felt upset enough, but that evening he got two messages which opened the earth under him. One was that Odysseus had disappeared at night from his boat while on the way back to Parolando. Nobody knew what had happened to him. He was just gone. The second message informed him that William Grevel, the man who’d been spying on John, had been found under a ledge at the base of the mountain, his skull smashed in.

Somehow, John had found him out and executed him. And John would be laughing because Sam could not prove that or, for that matter, even admit that Grevel had been working for him.

Sam called in von Richthofen and de Bergerac and others whom he considered to be his people. It was true that de Bergerac and he were hostile because of
Livy, but de Bergerac preferred Clemens to John, with whom he had had some hot words.

“Maybe Odysseus’ disappearance from the boat is only a coincidence,” Sam said. “But that, plus Grevel’s death, makes me wonder if John isn’t striking at me through my friends. He may be planning on cutting you down, one by one, under circumstances where he can’t be accused. He’s crafty. He probably won’t do anything now for some time. But Odysseus was gotten rid of in a place where an investigation will probably reveal nothing. And I can’t accuse John about Grevel without exposing what I’ve been doing. So, watch out for situations where accidents could happen. And be careful when you are alone.”

“Morbleu!” de Bergerac said. “If it wasn’t for this ridiculous law against dueling, I could challenge John and run him through. You, Sinjoro Clemens, were responsible for that law!”

“I was raised in a country where duels were common,” Sam said. “The whole idea sickens me. If you’d seen the tragedies…well, never mind. I guess you did see, and it doesn’t seem to have affected you.
Anyway, do you think for a moment that John would ever let you live long enough to meet him for a duel? No, you’d disappear or have an accident, you can bet on that.”

“Why can’t John have an accident?” Joe Miller said.

“How would you get past the living wall of his bodyguards?” Sam said. “No, if John has an accident, it’ll have to be a genuine one.”

He dismissed them with the exception of de Bergerac and of Joe, who never left him unless he was sick or Sam wanted privacy.

“The Stranger said that he’d picked out twelve humans for the final onslaught against the Misty Tower,” Sam said. “Joe, you, Richard Francis Burton, Odysseus, and me make five. But none of us knows who the other seven are. Now Odysseus is gone, and God knows if we’ll ever see him again. The Stranger implied that all of the twelve would join the others on the Riverboat somewhere along the line. But if Odysseus was resurrected somewhere to the south, down River, so far away he can’t get back up here before the Riverboat is built, then he is out of luck.”
Cyrano shrugged and rubbed his long nose. “Why worry? Or is that your nature? For all we know, Odysseus is not dead. He may have been contacted by this Mysterious Stranger—who, by the way, Odysseus claims is a woman and so his Stranger is not the one that you and I met—mordieux!—I digress! As I said, Odysseus may have been called away suddenly by this so-mysterious person and we will find out in time what did happen! Let that shadowy angel—or fiend—take care of the matter. We must concentrate on getting this fabulous boat constructed and skewering anybody who gets in our way.”

“That maketh thenthe,” Joe said. “If Tham had a hair for every time he worried, he’d look like a porcupine. Which, now that I come to think of it. . . .”

“Out of the mouths of babes...and tailless monkeys,” Sam said. “Or is it the other end? Anyway, if everything goes well—and so far it hasn’t—we’ll start bonding the magnalium plates for the hull in thirty days. That’ll be my happiest day, until we actually launch the boat. I’ll be happier even than when Livy said yes. . . .”

He could have cut himself off sooner, but he wanted
to antagonize Cyrano. The Frenchman, however, did not react. Why should he? He had Livy; she was saying yes to him all the time.

“Me, I do not like the idea,” Cyrano said, “since I am a peaceful man. I would like to have the leisure to indulge myself with the good things of life. I would like to have an end to wars, and if there is to be any bloodshed, let it be between gentlemen who know how to wield their swords. But we cannot build the boat without interference, because those who do not have iron desire it and will not stop until they get it. So, me, I think that John Lackland may be right in one particular. Perhaps we should wage an all-out war as soon as we have enough weapons, and clear The River, on both sides, of all opposition for thirty miles both ways. We can then have unlimited access to the wood and the bauxite and platinum....”

“But if you did that, if you killed all the inhabitants, within a day your countries would be filled up,” Sam said. “You know how resurrection works. Look at how swiftly this area was re-inhabited after the meteorite had killed everybody in it.”
Cyrano held up a long—and dirty—finger. Sam wondered if Livy was losing her battle to keep him clean.

"Ah!" Cyrano said. "But these people will remain unorganized, and we, being on the spot, will organize them, take them in as citizens of the expanded Parolando. We will include them in the lottery for the crew of the boat. In the long run, it would be faster to stop the boat building now and do as I suggest."

And I will send you forth in the lead, Sam thought. And it will be David and Bathsheba and Uriah all over again. Except that David probably didn’t have a conscience, never lost a wink of sleep over what he’d done.

"I don’t think so," Sam said. "In the first place, our citizens will fight like hell to defend themselves, because they’re involved in the boat. But they’re not going to engage in a war of conquest, especially after they figure out that bringing new citizens into the lottery is going to reduce their chances enormously. Besides, it isn’t right."

De Bergerac stood up, his hand on the hilt of his rapier. "Perhaps you are right. But the day that you
made an agreement with John Lackland and then murdered Erik Bloodaxe, that day was the day that you launched your boat on blood and treachery and cruelty. I do not reproach you, my friend. What you did was unavoidable, if you wanted the boat. But you cannot start thus and then shy away from similar, or even worse, acts. Not if you want your boat. Good night, my friend.”

He bowed and left. Sam puffed on his cigar and then said, “I hate that man! He tells the truth!”

Joe stood up, and the floor creaked under his eight hundred pounds. “I’m going to bed. My head hurtth. Thith whole thing ith giving me a pain in my athth. Either you do or you don’t. It’th that thimple.”

“If I had my brainth in my athth, I’d thay the thame thing!” Sam snarled. “Joe, I love you! You’re beautiful! The world is so uncomplex! Problems make you sleepy, and so you sleep! But I....”

“Good night, Tham!” Joe said and walked into the texas. Sam made sure that the door was barred and that the guards he’d posted around the building were alert. Then he went to bed, too.
He dreamed about Erik Bloodaxe, who chased him through the decks and into the hold of the Riverboat, and he awoke yelling. Joe was looming over him, shaking him. The rain was pounding the roof, and thunder was booming somewhere up along the face of the mountain.

Joe stayed awhile after making some coffee. He put a spoonful of dried crystals into cold water, and the coffee crystals heated the mixture in three seconds. They sipped their coffee and Sam smoked a cigarette while they talked about the days when they had voyaged down The River with Bloodaxe and his Vikings in search of iron.

“At leath, ve uthed to have fun now and then,” Joe said. “But not anymore. There’th too much vork to do and too many people out to thkin our hideth. And your woman vould thyow up whith that big-nothed Thyrano.”

Sam chuckled and said, “Thanks for the first laugh I’ve had in days, Joe. Big-nosed! Ye Gods!”

“Thometimeth I’m too thubtle for even you, Tham,” Joe said. He rose up from the table and walked back to his room. There was little sleep thereafter. Sam had
always liked to stay in bed even after a full night’s sleep. Now he got less than five hours each night, though he did take a siesta sometimes. There always seemed to be someone who had to have a question answered or wanted to thrash out an issue. His chief engineers were far from agreeing on everything, and this much disturbed Sam. He had thought engineering was a cut-and-dried thing. You had a problem, and you solved it the best way. But van Boom, Velitsky, and O’Brien seemed to be living in worlds that did not quite dovetail. Finally, to spare himself the aggravating and often wasted hours of wrangling, he delegated the final word to van Boom. They were not to worry him about anything unless they needed his authorization.

It was amazing the number of things which he would have considered to be only in the engineering province which needed his authorization.

Iyeyasu conquered not only the Bushman-Hottentot area across The River from him but also nine miles of the Ulmak territory. Then he sent a fleet down to the three-mile-long area below the Ulmak, where seventeenth-century A.D. Sauk and Fox Indians lived.
This area was conquered with resultant slaughter of half the inhabitants. Iyeyasu then began dickering with Parolando for a higher price for his wood. Also, he wanted an amphibian just like the *Firedragon I*.

By then the second *Firedragon* was almost done.

At this time over five hundred blacks from Parolando had been exchanged for an equal number of Dravidians. Sam had steadfastly refused to accept the Wahhabi Arabs, or at least had insisted that the Asiatic Indians come first. Hacking apparently did not like this, but nothing had been said in the agreement about which group had priority.

Hacking, having heard from his spies about Iyeyasu’s demands, sent a message. He wanted a *Firedragon*, too, and he was willing to exchange a great amount of minerals for it.

Publius Crassus and Tai Fung allied to invade the area across The River from them. This was occupied by Stone Age peoples from everywhere and every time and stretched for fourteen miles along the left bank. With their superior steel weapons and numbers, the invaders killed half the population and enslaved the rest.
And they upped their price for the wood but kept it below Iyeyasu’s.

Spies reported that Chernsky, who ruled the fourteen-mile-long nation just north of Parolando, had made a visit to Soul City. What happened there was anybody’s guess, since Hacking had set up a security system that seemed to be one hundred percent effective. Sam had gotten in eight blacks to spy for him, and he knew that John had sent in at least a dozen. The heads of all were tossed from boats in the mists late at night onto the top of the wall along the bank of Parolando.

Van Boom came to Sam late one night and said that Firebrass had cautiously approached him.

“He offered me the position of chief engineer on the boat,” van Boom said.

“He offered it to you?” Sam said, his cigar almost dropping.

“Yes. He didn’t say so in so many words, but I got the idea. The Riverboat will be taken over by the Soul Citizens, and I will be chief engineer.”

“And what did you say about his fine offer? After all,
you can’t lose, either way.”

“I told him not to etch a pseudocircuit. Come out and say it. He wouldn’t, though he grinned, and I told him I hadn’t sworn an oath of loyalty to you, but I had accepted your offer and that was as good. I wasn’t going to betray you, and if Soul City invaded Parolando, I’d defend it to the death.”

“That’s fine, superb!” Sam said. “Here, have a snort of bourbon! And a cigar! I’m proud of you and proud of myself, to command such loyalty. But I wish... I wish....”

Van Boom looked over the cup. “Yes?”

“I wish you’d strung him along. We could have found out a lot with you feeding us information.”

Van Boom put the cup down and stood up. His handsome brown features were ugly. “I am not a dirty spy!”

“Come back!” Sam said, but van Boom ignored him. Sam buried his head in his arms for a minute and then picked up van Boom’s cup. Never let it be said that Samuel Langhorne Clemens wasted good whiskey. Or even bad, for that matter. Although the grail never
yielded any but the best.

The man’s lack of realism irritated him. At the same time, he had a counterfeeling of warm pleasure. It was good to know that incorruptible men existed.

At least, Sam did not have to worry about van Boom.
In the middle of the night, he awoke wondering if he did have to worry after all. What if van Boom was not as upright as he said? What if the clever Firebrass had told van Boom to go to Clemens with his story? What better way to put a man off his guard? But then it would have been better if van Boom had pretended to Sam that he was pretending to go along with Firebrass.

“I’m beginning to think like King John!” Sam said aloud.

He finally decided that he had to trust van Boom. He was stiff and sometimes a little strange, which was what you’d expect from an engineer, but he had a moral backbone as inflexible as a fossilized dinosaur’s.

The work on the great Riverboat went on day and night. The plates of the hull were bonded, and the beams were welded on. The batacitor and the giant electric motors were built, and the work on the transportation system of the cranes and engines was
ended. The cranes themselves were enormous structures on huge rails, powered by electricity from the prototype batacitor. People came from thousands of miles up and down The River, in catamarans, big galleys, dugouts, and canoes, to see the fabulous works.

Sam and King John agreed that so many people wandering about would get in the way of the work and would enable spies to function more efficiently.

"Also, it’ll put the temptation to steal before them, and we don’t want to be responsible for tempting people. They have enough trouble as it is," Sam said.

John did not smile. He signed the order that expelled all non-citizens, except for ambassadors and messengers, and that kept any more from coming in. This still did not prevent many boats from sailing by while the occupants gawked. By then the dirt walls and stone walls along the bank were about finished. There were, however, many breaks through which the curious could stare. These were left for ingress of freight boats bringing in wood and ore and flints. Moreover, since the plain sloped up toward the hills, the tourists could see
many of the factories and the cranes, and the great structure of the boatyard was visible for miles around.

After a while, the tourist trade petered off. Too many were getting picked up along the way by grail slavers. Word got around that it was getting dangerous to travel The River in that section. Six months passed. The wood supply in the area was cut off. Bamboo grew to full length in from three weeks to six weeks; the trees took six months to grow to full maturity. Every state for fifty miles both ways from Parolando had enough wood for its own uses only.

Parolando’s representatives made treaties with more distant states, trading iron ore and weapons for food. There was a very large supply of siderite masses left yet, so Sam was not worried about running out of it. But the mining of it took many men and materials and caused the central part of Parolando to look like a heavily shelled landscape. And the more wood that was brought in, the more men, materials, and machines had to be diverted from the boatbuilding to make weapons for trade. Moreover, the increase in shipping resulted in more demand for wood to build freighters. And more men had to be trained and shipped out as sailors and
guards for the wood-carrying and ore-carrying fleets. It got to the point where boats had to be rented from neighboring states, and the rent, as always, was iron-nickel ore and finished weapons.

Sam wanted to be at the boatyard from dawn to dusk and even later, because he loved every minute of progress in the construction of the great boat. But he had so many administrative duties only indirectly or not at all connected with the boat that he could be in the boatyard only two to three hours—on a good day. He tried to get John to take over more of the administration, but John would accept only duties which gave him more power over the military forces or allowed him to exert pressure on those who opposed him.

The anticipated attempts at assassination of those close to Sam did not occur. The bodyguards and the close watch at nights were continued, but Sam decided that John was going to lay low for a while. He had probably seen that it would be best for his purposes to wait until the boat was nearly finished.

Once, Joe Miller said, “Tham, don’t you think maybe
you’re wrong about John? Maybe he’s going to be content with being the second-in-command of the boat?”

“Joe, would a sabertooth part with his canines?”

“What?”

“John is rotten to the core. The old kings of England were never any great shakes, morally speaking. The only difference between them and Jack the Ripper was that they operated openly and with the sanction of Church and State. But John was such a wicked monarch that it became traditional to never name another English king John. And even the Church, which had a high tolerance for evil in high places, could not stomach John. The Pope slapped the Interdict on the entire nation and brought John crawling and begging to the feet of the Pope, like a whipped puppy. But I suppose that even when he was kissing the Pope’s foot, he managed to suck a little blood from the big toe. And the Pope must have checked his pockets after he embraced John.

“What I’m trying to put across is that John couldn’t reform even if he wanted to. He’ll always be a human weasel, a hyena, a skunk.”
Joe puffed on a cigar even longer than his nose and said, “Vell, I don’t know. Humanth can change. Look at what the Church of the Thecond Chanthe hath done. Look at Göring. Look at you. You told me that in your time women wore clotheth which covered them from the neck to the ankleth, and you got ekthited if you thaw a good-looking ankle, and a thigh, oh my! Now you aren’t too dithturbed if you thee....”

“I know! I know!” Sam said. “Old attitudes and what the psychologists call conditioned reflexes can be changed. That’s why I say that anybody who still carries in him the racial and sexual prejudices he had on Earth is not taking advantage of what The River offers. A man can change, but....”

“He can?” Joe said. “But you alvayth told me that everything in life, even the vay a man actth and thinkth, ith determined by what vent on long before he vath even born. What ith it? Yeth, it’th a determinithtic philothophy, that’th vhat. Now, if you believe that everything ith fikthed in itth courthe, that humanth are mathyineth, tho to thpeak, then how can you believe that men can chanche themthelveth?”
“Well,” Sam drawled, looking fierce, his excessively bushy eyebrows pulled down, his blue-green eyes bright above the falcon nose, “well, even my theories are mechanically determined and if they conflict, that can’t be helped.”

“Then, for heaven’s thaketh,” Joe said, throwing up his football-sized hands, “vhat’s the uthe of talking about it? Or even doing anything? Vhy don’t you juth give up?”

“Because I can’t help myself,” Sam said. “Because, when the first atom in this universe bumped against the second atom, my fate was decreed, my every thought and action was fixed.”

“Then you can’t be, uh, rethponsible for vhat you do, right?”

“That’s right,” Sam said. He felt very uncomfortable.

“Then John can’t help it that he’th a murdering treacherouth thoroughly dethpicable thvine?”

“No, but then I can’t help it that I despise him for being a swine.”

“And I thuppothe that if thomebody thmarter than I
am came along and thyowed you, by thstrict undeniable lochic, that you vere wrong in your philothophy, that you vould thyay that he can’t help thinking you’re wrong? But he’th wrong, it’th juthg that he’th predetermined, mechanically, to think the vay he doeth.”

“I’m right, and I know it,” Sam said, puffing harder on his cigar. “This hypothetical man couldn’t convince me because his own reasoning does not spring from a free will, which is like a vegetarian tiger—that is, it doesn’t exist.”

“But your own reathoning doethn’t thpring from a free vill, either.”

“True. We’re all screwed. We believe what we have to.”

“You laugh at thothe people who have what you call invinthible ignoranthe, Tham. Yet you’re full of it, yourthelf.”

“Lord deliver us from apes that think they’re philosophers!”

“Thee! You fall back on inthultth when you can’t think of anything elthe to thay! Admit it, Tham! You haven’t
got a lochical leg to thtand on!"

“You just aren’t capable of seeing what I mean, because of the way you are,” Sam said.

“You thould talk to Thyrano de Bercherac more, Tham. He’th ath big a thynic ath you, although he doethn’t go ath far ath you do vith determinithm.”

“I’d think you two incapable of talking to each other. Don’t you two resent each other, you look so much alike? How can you stand nose to nose, as it were, and not break up with laughter? It’s like two anteaters....”

“Intuhlth! Intuhlth! Oh, whath’th the uthe?”

“Exactly,” Sam said. Joe did not say good-night, and he did not call after him. He was nettled. Joe looked so dumb with that low forehead and the bone-ringed eyes and comical dill pickle nose and gorilla build and his hairiness. But behind those little blue eyes and the lisping was an undeniable intelligence.

What disturbed him most was Joe’s comment that his deterministic belief was only a rationalization to excuse his guilt. Guilt for what? Guilt for just about everything bad that had happened to those whom he loved.
But it was a philosophic labyrinth which ended in a quagmire. Did he believe in mechanical determinism because he wanted to not feel guilty, or did he feel guilty, even though he should not, because the mechanical universe determined that he should feel guilty?

Joe was right. There was no use thinking about it. But if a man’s thinking was set on its course by the collision of the first two atoms, then how could he keep from thinking about it if he were Samuel Langhorne Clemens, alias Mark Twain?

He sat up later than usual that night, but he was not working at his duties. He drank at least a fifth of ethyl alcohol mixed with fruit juice.

Two months before, Firebrass had said he could not understand the failure of Parolando to make ethyl alcohol. Sam had been upset. He had not known that grain alcohol could be made. He thought that the only supply of liquor would have to be the limited amounts that the grails yielded.

No, Firebrass had said. Hadn’t any of his engineers told him? If the proper materials, such as acid, coal gas,
or acetaldehyde, and a proper catalyst were available, then wood cellulose could be converted into ethyl alcohol. That was common knowledge. But Parolando, until recently, was the only place on The River—he presumed—which had the materials to make grain alcohol.

Sam had called in van Boom, who replied that he had enough to worry about without providing booze for people who drank too much as it was.

Sam had ordered materials and men diverted. For the first time in the history of The River, as far as anybody knew, potable alcohol was being made on a large scale. This resulted not only in happier citizens, except for the Second Chancers, but in a new industry for Parolando. They exported alcohol in exchange for wood and bauxite.

Sam fell into bed and the next morning, for the first time, refused to get up before dawn. But the next day he rose as usual.

Sam and John sent a message to Iyeyasu that they would regard it as a hostile act if he invaded the rest of the Ulmak territory of Chernsky’s Land.
Iyeyasu replied that he had no intention of waging war on these lands, and he proved it by invading the state just north of his, Sheshshub’s Land. Sheshshub, an Assyrian born in the seventh century B.C., had been a general of Sargon II, and so, like most powerful people on Earth, had become a leader on the Riverworld. He gave Iyeyasu a good fight, but the invaders were more numerous.

Iyeyasu was one worry. There were plenty of others to keep Sam going day and night. Hacking finally sent a message, through Firebrass, that Parolando should quit stalling. He wanted the amphibian promised so long ago. Sam had kept pleading technical difficulties, but Firebrass told him that was no longer acceptable. So the Firedragon III was reluctantly shipped off.

Sam made a visit to Chernsky to reassure him that Parolando would defend Černskujo. Coming back, a half mile upwind of the factories, Sam almost gagged. He had been living so long in the acid-bath-cum-smoke atmosphere that he had gotten used to it, but any vacation from it cleansed his lungs. It was like stepping into a glue-and-sulfur factory. And, though the wind
was a fifteen-mph breeze, it did not carry the smoke away swiftly enough. The air definitely was hazy. No wonder, he thought, that Publiujo, to the south, complained.

But the boat continued to grow. Standing before the front port of his pilothouse, Sam could look out every morning and be consoled for his toil and tiredness and for the hideousness and stench of the land. In another six months, the three decks would be completed, and the great paddle wheels would be installed. Then a plastic coating would be put over the part of the hull which would come into contact with water. This plastic would not only prevent electrolysis of the magnalium, it would reduce the water turbulence, thus adding ten mph to the boat’s speed.

During this time, Sam received some good news. Tungsten and iridium had been found in Selinujo, the country just south of Soul City. The report was brought by the prospector, who trusted no one else to transmit it. He also brought some bad news. Selina Hastings refused to let Parolando mine there. In fact, if she had known that a Parolandano was digging along her mountain, she would have thrown him out. She did not
want to be unfriendly, indeed, she loved Sam Clemens, since he was a human being. But she did not approve of the Riverboat, and she would not permit anything to go out of her land that would help build the vessel.

Sam erupted, and, as Joe said, “thyot blue thyit for mileth around.” The tungsten was very much needed for hardening their machine tools but even more for the radios and, eventually, the closed-circuit TV sets. The iridium could be used to harden their platinum for various uses, for scientific instruments, surgical tools, and for pen points.

The Mysterious Stranger had told Sam that he had set up the deposit of minerals here but that his fellow Ethicals did not know that he had done so. Along with the bauxite, cryolite, and platinum would be tungsten and iridium. But an error had been made, and the latter two metals had been deposited several miles south of the first three.

Sam did not tell John at once, because he needed time to think about the situation. John, of course, would want to demand that the metals be traded to Parolando or that war be declared.
While he was pacing back and forth in the pilothouse, clouding the room with green smoke, he heard drums. They were using a code which he did not know but recognized, after a minute, as that used by Soul City. A few minutes later, Firebrass was at the foot of the ladder.

“Sinjoro Hacking knows all about the discovery of tungsten and iridium in Selinujo. He says that if you can come to an agreement with Selina, fine. But don’t invade her land. He’d regard that as a declaration of war on Soul City.”

Sam looked out the starboard port past Firebrass. “Here comes John hotfooting it,” he said. “He’s heard the news, too. His spy system is almost as good as yours, a few minutes less good, I’d say. I don’t know where the leaks in my system are, but they’re so wide that I’d be sunk if I was a boat, and I may be anyway.”

John, his eyes inflamed, his face red, and puffing and panting, entered. Since the introduction of grain alcohol, he had put on even more fat, and he seemed to be half drunk all the time and all drunk half the time.

Sam was angered, but at the same time, he was
amused. John would have liked to summon him to his palace, in keeping with his dignity as an ex-King of England. But he knew that Sam would not come for a long time, if at all, and meanwhile there was no telling how much hanky-panky Firebrass and Sam would manufacture.

“What’s going on?” John said, glaring.

“You tell me,” Sam said. “You seem to know more about the shady side of affairs than I do.”

“None of your wisecracks!” John said. Without being asked, he poured out a quarter of purple passion into a stein. “I know what that message is about even if I don’t know the code!”

“I thought as much,” Sam said. “For your information, in case you missed anything....” and he told him what Firebrass had said.

“The arrogance of you blacks is unendurable,” John said. “You are telling Parolando, a sovereign state, how it must conduct itself in vital business. Well, I say you can’t! We will get those metals, one way or the other! Selinujo doesn’t need them; we do! It can’t hurt Selinujo to give them up. We will give a fair trade!”
“In what?” Firebrass said. “Selinujo doesn’t want weapons or alcohol. What can you trade?”

“Peace, freedom from war!”

Firebrass shrugged and grinned, thus incensing John even more.

“Sure,” Firebrass said, “you can make your offer. But what Hacking says still goes.”

“Hacking has no love for Selinujo,” Sam said. “He kicked out all the Second Chancers, black or white.”

“That’s because they were preaching immediate pacifism. They also preach, and apparently practice, love for all, regardless of color, but Hacking says they’re a danger to the state. The blacks have to protect themselves, otherwise they would be enslaved all over again.”

“The blacks?” Sam said.

“Us blacks!” Firebrass replied, grinning.

This was not the first time Firebrass had given the impression that he was not so deeply concerned with skin color. His identification with blacks, as such, was weak. His life had not been untouched by racial
prejudice, but it had not been much affected. And he said things now and then that indicated that he would like a berth on the boat.

All this, of course, could be a put-on.

“We’ll negotiate with Sinjorino Hastings,” Sam said. “It would be nice to have radios and TV for the boat, and the machine shops could use the tungsten. But we can get along without them.”

He winked at John to indicate that he should take this line. But John was as stone-headed as usual.

“What we do with Selinujo is our problem, nobody else’s!”

“I’ll tell Hacking,” Firebrass said. “But Hacking is a strong person. He won’t take any crap from anybody, least of all white capitalist imperialists.”

Sam choked, and John stared.

“That’s what he regards you as!” Firebrass said. “And the way he defines those terms, you are what he says you are.”

“Because I want this boat so badly!” Sam shouted. “Do you know what this boat is for, what its ultimate
He fought back his anger, sobbing with the effort. He felt dizzy. For a moment, he had almost told about the Stranger.

“What is it?” Firebrass said.

“Nothing,” Sam replied. “Nothing. I just want to get to the headwaters of The River, that’s all. Maybe the secret of this whole shebang is there? Who knows? But I certainly don’t like criticism from someone who just wants to sit around on his dead black ass and collect soul brothers. If he wants to do that, more power to him, but I still hold to integration as the ideal. And I’m a Missouri white born in 1835! So how’s that for going against your heritage and your environment? The point is, if I don’t use the siderite metal to build a boat, which is designed for travel only, not for aggression, then someone else will. And that someone else may use it to conquer and to hold, instead of for tourist purposes.

“Now, we’ve gone along with Hacking’s demands, paid his jacked-up prices for the ores when we could have gone down there and taken them from him. John’s apologized for what he called you and Hacking, and if
you think it’s easy for a Plantagenet to do that, you
don’t know your history. It’s too bad about the way
Hacking feels. I don’t know that I blame him. Of
course, he hates whites. But this is not Earth!
Conditions are radically different here!”

“But people bring their attitudes along with them,”
Firebrass said. “Their hates and loves, dislikes and
likes, prejudices, reactions, everything.”

“But they can change!”

Firebrass grinned. “Not according to your
philosophy. Rather, not unless mechanical forces
change them. So, Hacking isn’t determined by anything
to change his attitude. Why should he? He’s
experienced the same exploitation and contempt here as
he did on Earth.”

“I don’t want to argue about that,” Sam said. “I’ll tell
you what I think we should do!”

He stopped and stared out the port. The whitish-gray
hull and upper works gleamed in the sun. How
beautiful! And she was, in a sense, all his! She was
worth everything he was being put through!

“I’ll tell you what,” he said more slowly. “Why
doesn’t Hacking come up here? Pay a little visit? He can look around, see for himself what we’re doing. See our problems. Maybe he’ll appreciate our problems, see we’re not blue-eyed devils who want to enslave him. In fact, the more he helps us, the sooner he’ll be rid of us.”

“I’ll give him your message,” Firebrass said. “Maybe he’ll want to do that.”

“We’ll greet him in style,” Sam said. “A twenty-one-gun salute, big reception, food, liquor, gifts. He’ll see we aren’t such bad fellows after all.”

John spat. “Pah!” but he said no more. He knew that Sam’s proposal was best.

Three days later, Firebrass brought a message. Hacking would come, after Parolando and Selinujo had agreed on the disposition of the metals.

Sam felt like a rusty old boiler in a Mississippi steamboat. A few more pounds of pressure, and he would blow sky-high.

“Sometimes, I think you’re right!” he shouted at John. “Maybe we should just take over these countries and get it done with!”
“Of course,” John said smoothly. “Now, it is obvious that that ex-Countess Huntingdon—she must be descended from my old enemy, the Earl of Huntingdon—is not going to give in. She is a religious fanatic, a nut, as you say. And Soul City will fight us if we invade Selinujo. Hacking can’t go back on his word. And he’s stronger now that we’ve given him the Firedragon III. But I say nothing about that; I do not reproach you. I have been thinking much about this mess.”

Sam stopped pacing and looked at John. John had been thinking. Shadows would be moving inside shadows; daggers would be unsheathed; the air would get gray and chill with stealth and intrigue; blood would spurt. And the sleeping would do well to stir.

“I do not say that I have been in contact with Iyeyasu, our powerful neighbor to the north,” John said. He was slumped down in the tall-backed red-leather-covered chair and staring into the purple passion in the tilted stein.

“But I have information, or means of getting it. I am certain that Iyeyasu, who feels very strong indeed, would like to acquire even more territory. And he
would like to do us a favor. In return for certain payments, of course. Say, an amphibian and a flying machine? He is wild to fly one of those himself, you know. Or didn’t you?

“If he attacked Selinujo, Hacking could not blame us. And if Soul City and Iyeyasujo fought, and Soul City was destroyed and Iyeyasujo weakened, how could that fail to benefit us? Moreover, I happen to have learned that Chernsky has made a secret compact with Soul City and Tifonujo to fight if any of them are invaded by Iyeyasu. Certainly, the resultant carnage would find them weakened and us strengthened. We could then take them over or at least do what we wished without interference. In any case, we would ensure that we had uncontrolled access to the bauxite and the tungsten.”

That skull under that mass of tawny hair must hold a thunder-mugful of worms. Worms that fed on corruption and intrigue and deviousness. He was so crooked, he was admirable.

“Did you ever meet yourself coming around a corner?” Sam said.
“What?” John said, looking up. “Is this another of your unintelligible insults?”

“Believe me, it’s as close to a compliment as you’ll ever get—from me. Of course, it’s all hypothetical. But if Iyeyasu did attack Selinujo, what excuse would he have? They’ve never offended him, and they’re sixty miles away from him on our side of The River.”

“When did one nation ever need a reasonable excuse for invasion?” John said. “But the fact is that Selinujo keeps sending missionaries into Iyeyasujo, though he has kicked out all Chancers. Since Selinujo won’t stop doing this, then....”

“Well,” Sam said, “I couldn’t let Parolando get involved in a deal like this. But if Iyeyasu decides on his own to fight, there’s nothing we can do about it.”

“And you call me dishonest!”

“There’s nothing I could do about it!” Sam said, clamping down on his cigar. “Nothing! And if something develops that’s good for the boat, then we’ll take advantage of it.”

“The shipments from Soul City would be held up while the fighting was going on,” John said.
“We’ve got enough stock to keep going for a week. The big worry would be wood. Maybe Iyeyasu would be able to keep that coming even with a war going on, since the fighting will be south of us. We could handle the chopping and transportation ourselves. If he didn’t intend to invade for a couple of weeks, we could lay in extra stocks of ore from Soul City by offering them increased payments. Maybe promise them an airplane, the AMP-I. That’s just a toy, now that we’ve almost got our first amphibian airplane finished. All this is hypothetical, you understand?”

“I understand,” John said. He was not trying to mask his contempt.

Sam felt like shouting at him that he had no right to be contemptuous. Whose idea had it been, anyway?

It was the next day that the three chief engineers were killed.

Sam was there when it happened. He was standing on the scaffolding by the starboard side of the boat, looking down into the open hull. The colossal steam crane was lifting the immense electric motor which would be driving the port paddle wheel. The motor had
been moved during the night from the big building where it had been built. The moving had taken over eight hours and had been effected by the crane, which also had a gigantic winch. The winch, plus hundreds of men pulling on cables, had pulled the motor on its big car, which moved on steel rails.

Sam got up at dawn to watch the final work, the lifting and then the lowering of the motor into the hull and its attachment to the paddle-wheel axle. The three engineers were standing down in the bottom of the hull. Sam called down to them to get away, that they were too vulnerable if the motor should drop. But the engineers were stationed in three different places so that they could transmit signals to the men on the port scaffolding, who, in turn, were signaling the crane operator.

Van Boom turned to look up at Sam, and his teeth flashed whitely in his dark face. His skin looked purplish in the light of the big electric lamps.

And then it happened. A cable snapped, and the motor swung out to one side. The engineers froze for a second and then they ran but they were too late. The
motor fell to one side and crushed all three of them.

The impact shook the great hull and the vibrations made the scaffolding on which Sam stood quiver as if a quake were passing through the land.

Blood ran out from under the motor.
It took five hours to put in new cables on the crane, secure these to the motor, and lift the motor. The bodies were removed, the hull washed out, and then the motor was lowered again. A close inspection had determined that the damage to the motor casing would not affect the operation of the motor.

Sam was so depressed that he would have liked to have gone to bed and remained there for a week. But he could not do so. The work had to go on, and while there were good men who would see to it that it did go on, Sam did not want them to know how shaken he was.

Sam had many engineers, but van Boom and Velitsky were the only ones from the twentieth century. Though he had advertised by word of mouth and through the drum systems for more, he had gotten none.

The third day, he asked Firebrass into his pilothouse for a private conference. After giving him a cigar and
scotch, he asked him if he would be his chief engineer.

Firebrass’ cigar almost dropped out of his mouth.

“Steer me, stymate! Do I read you unfrosted? You want me as your number-one dillion?”

“Maybe we should talk in Esperanto,” Sam said.

“Okay,” Firebrass said. “I’ll bring it down to dirt. Just what do you want?”

“I’d like you to get permission to work for me on a temporary basis, supposedly.”

“Supposedly?”

“If you want it, the position is permanently yours. The day the boat sets out on the long journey, you can be its chief engineer.”

Firebrass sat silent for a long time. Sam got up and paced back and forth. Occasionally, he looked out the ports. The crane had put in the starboard motor, and now it was lowering parts of the batacitor into the hull. This would be thirty-six feet high when all the parts were secured together. After it was installed, a trial run would check the operation of the batacitor and the motors. A double cable, six inches thick, would be run
out for two hundred feet and its free end, attached to a large shallow hemisphere, would be slipped onto the top of the nearest grailstone. When the stone delivered its tremendous electrical energy, the energy would be transmitted by the cables into the batacitor, which would store it. And then the energy would be drawn out at a controlled rate to power the electrical motors.

Sam turned away from the port. "It’s not as if I were asking you to betray your country," he said. "In the first place, all you have to do now is to request permission from Hacking to work for me on the building of the boat. Later, you can make up your mind about going with us. Which would you rather do? Stay in Soul City where there is actually little to do except indulge yourself? Or go with us on the greatest adventure of all?"

Firebrass said, slowly, "Now, if I accepted your offer, if I say, I would not want to go as chief engineer. I would prefer to be the chief of your air force."

"That’s not as important a position as chief engineer!"

"It’s a lot more work and responsibility! Now, I like
the idea of flying again, and....”

“You can fly. You can fly! But you’d have to serve under von Richthofen. You see, I promised him that he would be the chief of our air force, which, after all, will only consist of two planes. What do you care whether or not you’re the chief as long as you get to fly?”

“It’s a matter of pride. I have thousands of hours more flying time than Richthofen, in planes far more complex and bigger and speedier. And I was an astronaut. I’ve been to the Moon and Mars and Ganymede and orbited Jupiter.”

“That doesn’t mean anything,” Sam said. “The planes you’ll be flying are very primitive. More like the World War I machines that Lothar flew.”

“Why does a nigger always have to take second place?”

“That’s unfair!” Sam said. “You could be chief engineer! You’d have thirty-five people under your command! Listen, if I hadn’t made Lothar that promise, you’d get the captaincy, believe me!”

Firebrass stood up. “I’ll tell you what. I’ll help you build the boat and set up the training of your engineer’s
department. But I get to fly during that time, too, and when the time comes we’ll talk about who’s going to be head of the air force.”

“I won’t break my promise to Lothar,” Sam said.

“Yes, but many things may happen between now and then.”

Sam was relieved in one way but disturbed in another. Hacking gave his permission, via drum, to use Firebrass. This suggested he wanted Firebrass to know the boat’s operation because he would be serving Hacking as chief engineer some day. And even if this was not being considered by Firebrass, he might be planning to remove von Richthofen before the boat was ready for launching. Firebrass did not seem like a cold-blooded murderer but looks meant nothing, as anyone with intelligence finds out if he has lived a few years among the human race.

Hacking sent word a few days later that he would agree to an extra-large shipment of minerals in Parolando in return for the AMP-I. Firebrass flew it the thirty-one miles to the northern limit of Soul City, where another flier, a black who had been a general in the
U.S. Air Force, took it over. A few days later, Firebrass returned by sailboat.

The batacitor and the electric motors worked perfectly. The paddle wheels turned over slowly in the air, then were speeded up, the vanes whistling they spun so swiftly.

When the time came, a canal could be dug from the water’s edge to the great boat, and it would wheel out into The River under its own power.

Lothar von Richthofen and Gwenafra were not getting along at all. Lothar had always been a “lady killer,” and he could not seem to help flirting. More often than not, he followed up the flirtation. Gwenafra had some definite ideas about fidelity with which Lothar agreed, in principle. It was the practice that tripped him up.

Hacking sent word that he intended to visit Parolando himself in two days. He wanted to hold a series of conferences on their trade, to check on the well-being of Parolando’s black citizens, and to see the great Riverboat.

Sam sent word back that he would be happy to
receive Hacking. He wasn’t, but the essence of diplomacy was dissimulation. The preparations for housing Hacking and his large entourage and setting up the conferences occupied Sam so that he did not get much chance to supervise the work on the boat.

Also, special preparations had to be made for docking the large number of ore boats from Soul City. Hacking was sending three times as much as the normal shipment to show his sincerity of desire for peace and understanding. Sam would have preferred that the shipments be spaced out, but then it was desirable to get as much as possible in as short a time as possible. The spies said that Iyeyasu was collecting several large fleets and a great number of fighting men on both sides of The River. And he had sent more demands to Selinujo to stop trying to land their missionaries on his territory.

About an hour before noon, Hacking’s boat docked. It was a large, two-masted, fore-and-aft rigged boat, about a hundred feet long. Hacking’s bodyguard, all tall well-muscled blacks holding steel axes (but with Mark I pistols in big holsters), marched down the gangplank. Their kilts were pure black, and their leather helmets
and cuirasses and boots were of black fish-skin leather. They formed in ranks of six on each side of the gangplank, and then Hacking himself came down the gangplank.

He was a tall, well-built man with a dark-brown skin, somewhat slanting eyes, a broad pug nose, thick lips, and a prominent chin. His hair was in the style called “natural.” Sam had not yet gotten used to this explosion of kinky hair on top of black men’s heads. There was something indefinably indecent in it; a Negro’s hair should be cut very close to the head. He still felt this way even after Firebrass had explained that the black American of the late twentieth century felt that “natural” hair was a symbol of his struggle for freedom. To them, close-cut hair symbolized castration of the black by the white.

Hacking wore a black towel as a cloak and a black kilt and leather sandals. His only weapon was a rapier in a sheath at his broad leather belt.

Sam gave the signal, and a cannon boomed twenty-one times. This was set on top of a hill at the edge of the plain. It was intended not only to honor Hacking but
to impress him. Only Parolando had artillery, even if it consisted of only one 75-millimeter cannon.

The introductions took place. Hacking did not offer to shake hands nor did Sam and John. They had been warned by Firebrass that Hacking did not care to shake hands with a man unless he regarded him as a proven friend.

There was some small talk after that while the grails of Hacking’s people were set on the nearest grailstone. After the discharge of energy at high noon, the grails were removed, and the chiefs of state, accompanied by their bodyguards and guards of honor, walked to John’s palace. John had insisted that the first meeting be held in his palace, doubtless to impress Hacking with John’s primacy. Sam did not argue this time. Hacking probably knew, from Firebrass, just how things stood between Clemens and Lackland.

Later, Sam got some grim amusement from John’s discomfiture at being bearded in his own house. During lunch, Hacking seized the floor and held it with a long-winded vitriolic speech about the evils the white man had inflicted on the black. The trouble was, Hacking’s
indictments were valid. Everything he said was true. Sam had to admit that. Hell, he had seen slavery and what it meant and had seen the aftermath of the Civil War. He had been born and raised in it. And that was long before Hacking was born. Hell, he had written *Huckleberry Finn* and *Pudd’nhead Wilson* and *A Connecticut Yankee*.

It did no good to try to tell Hacking that. Hacking paid him no attention.

That high-pitched voice went on and on, mixing obscenities with facts, exaggerations with facts, lurid tales of miseries, beatings, murders, starvation, humiliations, and so on.

Sam felt guilty and ashamed and, at the same time, angry. Why attack him? Why this blanket indictment?

“You are all guilty!” Hacking shouted. “Every white man is guilty!”

“I never saw more than a dozen blacks before I died,” John said. “What can I have to do with your tale of injustices?”

“If you had been born five hundred years later, you would have been the biggest honky of them all!”
Hacking said, “I know all about you, Your Majesty!”

Sam suddenly stood up and shouted, “Did you come here to tell us about what happened on Earth? We know that! But that is past! Earth is dead! It’s what’s taking place now that counts!”

“Yeah,” Hacking said. “And what’s taking place now is what took place on good old Earth! Things haven’t changed one shitty little bit! I look around here, and who do I see is head of this country? Two honkies! Where’s the black men? Your black population is about one-tenth of your population, and so you ought to have at least one black on a ten-man Council! Do I see one? Just one?”

“There’s Cawber,” Sam said.

“Yeah! A temporary member and he’s only that because I demanded you send me a black ambassador!”

“The Arabs make up about a sixth of your state,” Sam said, “and yet there isn’t one Arab on your council.”

“They’re white, that’s why! And I’m getting rid of them! Don’t get me wrong! There’s a lot of Arabs
that’re good men, unprejudiced men! I met them when I was a fugitive in North Africa. But these Arabs here are religious fanatics, and they won’t stop making trouble! So out they go! What we blacks want is a solid black country, where we’re all soul brothers! Where we can live in peace and understanding! We’ll have our own kind of world, and you honkies can have yours! Segregation with a capital S, Charlie! Here, a big S segregation can work, ’cause we don’t have to depend on the white man for our jobs or food or clothing or protection or justice or anything! We got it made, whitey! All we have to do is tell you to go to hell, keep away from us, and we got it made!”

Firebrass sat at the table with his dark-red kinky head bent over, looking down, and his bronzed hands placed over his face. Sam had the feeling that he was trying to keep from laughing. But whether he laughed inside himself at Hacking or at the ones who were being berated, Sam could not guess. Perhaps he was laughing at both.

John kept drinking the bourbon. The redness of his face came from more than the liquor. He looked as if he could explode at any time. It was difficult to swallow
insults about your injustice to blacks when you were innocent, but then John was guilty of so many hideous crimes that he should suffer for some, even if none were his. And, as Hacking said, John would have been guilty if he had been allowed a chance to be.

Just what did Hacking expect to gain by this? Certainly, if he wanted a closer relationship with Parolando, he was taking a peculiar approach to it.

Perhaps he felt that he had to put any white, no matter who, in his place. He wanted to make it clear that he, Elwood Hacking, a black, was not inferior to any white.

Hacking had been ruined by the same system that had ruined almost all Americans, black, white, red, or yellow, in one form or another, to a greater or lesser degree.

Would it always be this way? Forever twisted, hating, while they lived for who knew how many thousands upon thousands of years along The River?

At that moment, but for that moment only, Sam wondered if the Second Chancers were not right.

If they knew the way out from this imprisonment of
hate, they should be the only ones to be listened to. Not Hacking or John Lackland or Sam Clemens or anybody who suffered from lack of peace and love should have a word to say. Let the Second Chancers...

But he did not believe them, he reminded himself. They were just like the other faith dispensers of Earth. Well-intentioned, some of them, no doubt of that. But without the authority of truth, no matter how much they claimed it.

Hacking suddenly quit talking. Sam Clemens said, “Well, we didn’t plan on any after-dinner speeches, Sinjoro Hacking, but I thank you for your volunteering; we all thank you as long as you don’t charge us for it. Our exchequer is rather low at the moment.”

Hacking said, “You have to make a joke out of it, don’t you? Well, how about a tour? I’d love to see that big boat of yours.”

The rest of the day was passed rather pleasantly. Sam forgot his anger and his resentments in conducting Hacking through the factories, the shops, and, finally, through the boat. Even half finished, it was magnificent. The most beautiful sight he had ever seen.
thought, even—yes, even more beautiful than Livy’s face when she had first said she loved him.

Hacking did not become ecstatic, but he obviously was deeply impressed. He could not, however, refrain from commenting on the stench and the desolation.

Shortly before supper time, Sam was called away. A man who had landed from a small boat had demanded to see the ruler of the land. Since it was a Clemens man who took him in, Sam got the report. He went off at once in one of the two alcohol-burning “jeeps” that had been finished only a week before. The slender, good-looking blond youth at the guardhouse rose and introduced himself, in Esperanto, as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Sam questioned him in German, noting that, whatever the youth’s identity, he did speak the soft Austrian version of High German. His vocabulary contained words which Sam did not understand, but whether this was because they were just Austrian vocabulary items or eighteenth-century items, he did not know.

The man calling himself Mozart said that he had been living about twenty thousand miles up The River. He
heard about the boat, but what set him off on his journey was a tale that the boat would carry an orchestra to make music for the amusement of the passengers. Mozart had suffered for twenty-three years in this world of limited materials, where the only musical instruments were drums, whistles, wooden flutes and panpipes, and a crude sort of harp made of bone and the guts of a Riverfish. Then he had heard about the mining of the siderite and the great Riverboat and its orchestra with piano, violin, flute, horns, and all the other beautiful instruments that he had known on Earth, plus others that had been invented since his death in 1791. And here he was. Was there a place for him in the music-making ranks of the boat?

Sam was an appreciator, though not a passionate lover, of some classical music. But he was thrilled at meeting the great Mozart face to face. That is, if this man were Mozart. There were so many phonies on The River, claiming to be everybody from the original one-and-only Jesus H. Christ down to P. T. Barnum, that he took no man’s word for his identity. He had even met three men who claimed to be Mark Twain.

“It just so happens that the former archbishop of
Salzburg is a citizen of Parolando,” Sam said. “Even though you and he parted on bad terms, if I remember correctly, he’ll be glad to see you.”

Mozart did not turn pale or red. He said, “At last, somebody I knew during my lifetime! Would you believe....”

Sam would believe that Mozart had not met anybody he’d known on Earth. So far, he himself had met only three people he’d known, and his acquaintanceship had been extensive during his long life and worldwide travels. That his wife Livy was one of the three was a coincidence exceeding the bounds of probability. He suspected that the Mysterious Stranger had arranged that. But even Mozart’s eagerness in seeing the archbishop did not confirm that he was indeed Mozart. In the first place, the imposters that Sam had met had frequently insisted that those who were supposed to be their old friends were either mistaken or else imposters themselves. They had more gall than France. In the second place, the archbishop of Salzburg did not live in Parolando. Sam had no idea where he was. He had sprung him just to test Mozart’s reaction.
Sam agreed that Sinjoro Mozart could apply for citizenship. First, he straightened him out about the musical instruments. These had not been made yet. Nor would they be wood or brass. They would be electronic devices which could reproduce exactly the sounds of various instruments. But if Sinjoro Mozart was indeed the man he claimed to be, he had a good chance of being the conductor of the orchestra. And he could have all the time he wanted to compose new works.

Sam did not promise him that he would have the conductorship. He had learned his lesson about making promises.

A big party was held in John's palace in honor of Hacking, who seemed to have discharged his venom for the day at the first meeting. Sam talked with him for an hour and found that Hacking was very intelligent and literate, a self-educated man with a flair for the imaginative and the poetic.

That made his case even sadder, because such talent had been tragically wasted.

About midnight, Sam accompanied Hacking and
party to the big thirty-room, second-story, stone-and-bamboo building set aside for state guests. This was halfway between his quarters and John’s palace. Then he drove his jeep to his home, three hundred yards away. Joe sulked a little because he had wanted to drive, even though his legs were far too long for him to try this. They staggered up the ladder and barred the door. Joe went into the rear and flopped on his bed with a crash that shook the house on its stilts. Sam looked out of the ports just in time to see Cyrano and Livy, their arms around each other, lurch into the door of their hut. To their left, set above them, was von Richtofen’s hut, where he and Gwenafra had already gone to bed.

He muttered, “Good night!” not knowing just whom he was addressing, and fell into his own bed. It had been a long, hard, and trying day, ending up with a huge party at which everybody had drunk stupendous quantities of purple passion or grain alcohol and water and chewed much dreamgum and smoked much tobacco and marijuana.

He awoke dreaming that he was caught in a California earthquake on the Fourth of July.
He leaped out of bed and ran on the trembling floor to the pilothouse. Even before he reached the ports, he knew that the explosions and the earth-shaking were caused by invaders. He never reached the ports, because a rocket, whistling, its tail flaming red, struck one of the stilts. The roar deafened him, smoke whirled in through the broken ports, and he pitched forward. The house collapsed, and its front part fell down. History had repeated itself.
He banged into the wood and broken glass and earth
and lay with the wall under him while he tried to
come up out of his stunned condition. A big hand
picked him up. By the light of an explosion, he saw
Joe's great-nosed face. Joe had climbed down from the
open end of his room and thrown aside the lumber until
he had found Sam. He held the handles of his grail and
Sam's with his left hand.

"I don't know how, it's a miracle, but I'm not hurt
bad," Sam said. "Just bruised and cut by glass."

"I didn't have time to put on my armor," Joe said.
"But I got my akth. Here' th a thvord for you and a
pithtol and thome bulletth and powder charcheth."

"Who the hell can they be, Joe?" Sam said.

"I don't know. Thee! They're coming in through the
holeth in the vallth vhere the dockth are."

The starlight was bright. The clouds that sent the
rains down every night at three o'clock had not yet
come, but the mists over The River were heavy. Out of these, men were still pouring to add to the masses spreading over the plains. Behind the walls, in the mists, must be a fleet.

The only fleet that could get close without causing an alarm would be the Soul City fleet. Anybody else arriving at this hour would have had to have been within view of the spies that Sam and John Lackland had set up along The River, even in hostile territory. It couldn’t be Iyeyasu’s fleet; that was still sitting in the docks as of the report received just before midnight.

Joe peered over a pile of wood and said, “There’th a hell of a battle around John’th palathe. And the gueththouthe, vhere Hacking and hith boyth vath, ith on fire.”

The flames lit a number of bodies on the ground and showed the tiny figures struggling around the log stockade of John’s palace. Then, the cannon and its caisson were pushed before the stockade.

“That’s John’s jeep!” Sam said, pointing at the vehicle which had just driven up behind the cannon.

“Yes, and it’th our cannon!” Joe said. “But it’th
Hacking’th men that’th going to blath John out of hith little love netht.”

“Let’s get the hell out of here!” Sam said, and he scrambled over the lumber and in the opposite direction. He could not understand why the invaders had not sent men to his house yet. The rocket that had hit had come from the plains. And if Hacking and his men had sneaked out of the guesthouse to launch a surprise attack in conjunction with an attack from the supposed ore boats, then Sam should have been a primary target along with John Lackland.

He’d find out later what it was all about—if there was a later.

That Hacking’s men had gotten hold of the cannon was ill news for Parolando. Even as he thought this, he heard the big gun boom, one, two, three. He whirled in his flight and saw pieces of wood flying out from the smoke. John’s walls were wide open, and the next few shells should reduce his log palace to rubble.

There was only one good thing about the invaders having their hands on the cannon. The supply of shells was limited to fifty. Even with the many tons of nickel-
iron still in the ground, metal was not so common that it could be wasted to any extent on explosive shells.

Ahead was Cyrano and Livy’s hut. The door was open, and the place was empty. He looked up the hill. Lothar von Richthofen, clad only in a kilt, carrying a rapier in one hand and a pistol in the other, was running toward him. A few paces behind was Gwenafra with a pistol and a bag of bullets and gunpowder packages.

There were other men and women coming toward him. Among them were a few crossbowmen.

He shouted at Lothar to organize them, and he turned to look down on the plains. The docks were still black with men. If only the cannon could have been turned to catch them packed together and unable to retreat. But the cannon had been wheeled around from John’s palace, which was flaming, and was being trained on Parolandanoj hurrying up the hill.

Then a big dark machine came through a wide breach in the wall. Sam cried out with dismay. It was the Firedragon III given to Hacking. But where were the three amphibians of Parolando?

Presently he saw two coming toward the hills. Of a
sudden, the steam machine guns in the turrets began to stutter hissingly, and his men—his men!—were falling.

The Soul Citizens had captured the amphibians!

 Everywhere he looked, he saw a battle raging. There were men fighting around the Riverboat. He cried out again, because he could not endure the thought of its being damaged. But no cannon shells were delivered near it. Apparently the enemy was as concerned about it as he was.

 Rockets from the hills behind them were soaring over their heads and blowing up among the army below. Enemy rockets rose in reply; scores of red flames streaked above them; some came so close they could see the blur of the cylindrical body, the long bamboo stick protruding from the rear, and a whoosh as an exceptionally large one shot about ten feet above their heads. It just missed the top of the hill and blew up with a tremendous blast on the other side. Leaves from a nearby iron tree fluttered down.

 The next half hour—or was it two hours?—was a shrieking, yelling, shouting, gunpowder-stinking, blood-stinking, sweating, bowel-churning chaos. Time after
time, the Soul Citizens charged up the hill, and time after time they were repelled by rockets, by sixty-nine-caliber plastic bullets, by crossbow bolts and longbow arrows. Then a charge carried them through to the defenders, and it was rapier, broadsword, ax, club, spear, and dagger that drove them back.

Joe Miller, ten feet high, eight hundred pounds heavy, his hairy hide drenched with blood—his own and others’—swung his ax with its eighty-pound nickel-steel head at the end of an oak shaft three inches thick and six feet long. It crashed through oak shield and leather armor, brushed aside rapiers and spears and axes, split breastbones, took off arms and necks, halved skulls. When his enemies refused to come near him, he charged them. Time and again, he broke up charges that might otherwise have succeeded.

Many flintlock Mark I pistols were fired at him, but their shooters were so unnerved by him that they fired from too far away, and the big plastic bullets wobbled off to one side.

Then an arrow went through his left arm, and a man braver, or more foolhardy, than the rest stepped under
his ax and thrust a rapier into his thigh. The butt end of the shaft came back and broke his jaw and then the reversed ax severed his head. Joe could still walk, but he was losing blood fast. Sam ordered him to retreat to the other side of the hill, where the badly wounded were being treated.

Joe said, “No! I ain’t going!” and he fell to his knees with a groan.

“Get back there! That’s an order!” Sam screamed, and he ducked, though it was too late, as a bullet whistled by his ear and smashed to bits against the side of an iron tree. Some of the plastic must have ricocheted; he felt a stinging in his arm and calf.

Joe managed to heave himself up, like a sick elephant, and shambled off. Cyrano de Bergerac appeared from the darkness; he was covered with gunpowder smoke and streaked with blood. He held the basket hilt of a long, thin, bloody rapier in one hand and a pistol in the other. Behind him, equally dirty and bloody, her long dark hair loose behind her, was Livy. She carried a pistol and a bag of ammunition, and her function was to reload the pistols. Seeing Sam, she
smiled, her teeth white in the powder-blackened face.

“My God, Sam! I thought you were dead! The rocket against your house...!”

“I wish you were behind me in this,” he said.

That was all he had time to say, though he would not have said anything more, whatever the case. The enemy came back in another charge, slipping and sliding up over the piles of the fallen or leaping over them. The bowmen by then were out of ammunition, and the pistoleers had only a few more charges. But the enemy had about expended its powder too, though it had more arrows.

Joe Miller was gone, but Cyrano de Bergerac tried to make up for it and came close to doing so. The man was a demon, seemingly as thin and as flexible and as swift as the rapier he wielded. From time to time, he shot the pistol with his left hand into an opponent’s face and then lunged with the rapier, thrusting into another. He would toss the gun behind him, and Livy would stoop and pick it up and reload. Sam thought, briefly, of what a change had come about in Livy. He had never suspected her potentiality for action under conditions
like these. That frail, often sickly, violence-loathing woman was coolly performing duties that many men would have run from.

Among them me, he thought, if I had any time to think about it.

And especially now that Joe Miller was not by his side to protect him physically and to give him moral support, both of which he needed badly.

Cyrano thrust beneath a shield which a shrieking Wahhabi Arab lifted too high in his frenzy, and then Livy, seeing that she had to do it, that Cyrano could not, held the pistol in both hands and fired. The hammer made the barrel swerve, she brought it back into line, smoke and flame spurted out, and an Arab fell back with his shoulder torn off.

A massively built Negro leaped over the body with his ax raised in both hands and Cyrano, withdrawing the blade from the first man before he hit the ground, ran the axman through the adam’s apple.

Then the enemy retreated down the hill again. But now they waited while the big dark-gray amphibian, like a Merrimac on wheels, huffed toward them. Lothar
von Richthofen pushed against Sam, who stepped aside when he saw the aluminum-alloy tube and the rocket with its ten-pound warhead. A man knelt while Lothar loaded the rocket into the bazooka and then aimed it. Lothar was very good at this, and the rocket sailed down, its fiery arc ending against the front of the amphibian, its bull’s eye the single beam of light in its nose. Smoke covered it, and then the wind carried that away. The amphibian had stopped, but it came on now, its turrets turning and the steam guns lifting.

“‘Well, that was the last one,’” Lothar said. “‘We might as well get the hell out of here. We can’t fight that. Who should know better than we, heh?’”

The enemy was re-forming behind the armored vehicle. Many of them were uttering the ululating cries which the Ulmaks, the pre-Amerindians across The River, made during charges. Apparently, Hacking had enlisted those Ulmaks not yet conquered by Iyeyasu.

Suddenly, Sam could not see as well. Only the fires from the burning houses and from the open hearths and smelters, which were still operating, enabled him to see anything at all. The rain clouds had come as swiftly as
they always did, like wolves chasing the stars, and within a few minutes it would rain savagely.

He looked around him. Every attack had thinned them out. He doubted that they could have withstood the next one, even if the amphibian had not come.

There was still fighting going on to the north and the south on the plains and the hills along the plains. But the shooting and the cries had lessened.

The plains seemed to be darker than ever with the enemy.

He wondered if Publiujo and Tiftonujo had joined the invasion.

He took a last look at the giant hull of the Riverboat with its two paddle wheels, half hidden beneath the scaffolding and behind the colossal cranes. Then he turned. He felt like weeping, but he was too numbed. It would be some time before the tears would come.

It was more likely that his blood would run out before then, after which there would be no tears. Not in this body, anyway.

Guided by the fires of a dozen scattered huts, he
stumbled down the other side. Then the rains smashed down. And, at the same time, a tentacle of the enemy ran toward them from the left. Sam turned and pulled the trigger of his flintlock, and the rain, of course, drowned out the spark. But the enemy’s pistols were also rendered useless, except as clubs.

They came at the Parolandanoj with their swords and spears and axes. Joe Miller lunged forward, growling with a voice as deep as a cave bear’s. Though wounded, he was still a formidable and terrifying fighter. By the flashes of lightning and the rumbling of thunder, his ax cut them down. The others jumped in to help him, and in a few seconds the Soul Citizen survivors decided they had had enough. They would run off and wait for reinforcements. Why get killed now when victory was theirs?

Sam climbed two more hills. The enemy attacked from the right. A wing had broken through and raced on ahead to cut down the men and take the women captive. Joe Miller and Cyrano met them, and the attackers ran away, slipping and sliding through the wet roots of the cutaway grass.
Sam counted the survivors. He was shaken. There were about fifteen. Where had they all gone? He would have sworn that at least a hundred had been with him when he ordered them to cut and run for it.

Livy was still close behind Cyrano. Since the guns were no good now, she kept at Cyrano’s back and helped him with a spear thrust when she could.

Sam was cold and wet. And he was as miserable as Napoleon must have been on the retreat from Russia. All, all gone! His proud little nation and its nickel-iron mines and its factories and its invulnerable amphibians with their steam guns and its two airplanes and the fabulous Riverboat! All gone! The technological triumphs and marvels and the Magna Carta with the most democratic constitution any country had ever known and the goal of the greatest journey ever to be made! All gone!

And how? Through treachery, base treachery!

At least, King John had not been part of the betrayal. His palace had been demolished and he along with it, in all probability. The Great Betrayer had been betrayed.

Sam quit grieving then. He was still too frozen with
the terror of battle to think much about anything except survival. When they got to the base of the mountains, he led them north along it until they were opposite the dam. A lake about a quarter of a mile long and a half mile wide was before them. They cut down along it, coming after a while to a thick concrete wall across the top of which they walked. Then they were on top of the dam itself.

Sam walked back and forth a few paces until he found a sunken symbol, a diagonal cross, in the concrete. He called, "Here it is! Now, if only nobody squeals on us or some spy hasn’t found out about it!"

He let himself down into the cold water while the lightning streaked and the thunder bellowed far away. He shivered but he kept on going down, and when the water was up to his armpits his foot struck the first rung. He took a deep breath, closed his eyes, and sank down, his hand running along the concrete until it encountered the first rung. After that he pulled himself down by other rungs and at the sixth knew that the entrance was a few inches below it. He went under it and then up, and his head popped up into air and light. A platform a few inches higher than the water was in
front of him. Overhead was a dome the highest point of which was ten feet. Beyond the platform was an entrance. Six big electric lightbulbs lit the chamber harshly.

Shivering, gasping, he climbed onto the platform and went to the entranceway. Joe followed him a moment later. He called weakly, and Sam had to turn back and help him crawl onto the platform. He was bleeding from a dozen places.

The others came after him, one by one. They helped him get the titanthrop through the entrance and down an incline into a large chamber. There were beds, towels, food, liquor, weapons, and medicine. Sam had prepared this place for just such an emergency, but he had thought he was being foolishly cautious. Only the heads of the state and the few workers who had built this place knew about it.

Another entrance, at the bottom of the dam, was hidden beneath the flow which powered the wheels connected to the generators. This led to a shaft up which a man could climb only to come to a seemingly blank wall. But the man who knew how could open that
The whole project was, he knew, a product of the romantic foolishness of which he had not entirely rid himself. The idea of secret doors under a waterfall and under the lake and of hidden apartments where he could rest and plan his revenge while his enemies hunted in vain for him was irresistible. He had laughed at himself at times for having built the refuge. Now he was glad. Romanticism did have its uses.

Also hidden was a detonator. To set off the tons of dynamite inside the base of the dam he had only to connect two wires, and the dam would go up and the water of the lake would roar out and carry the central part of Parolando out into The River.

Sam Clemens and his Riverboat would also be destroyed, but that was the price to be paid.

The wounded were treated and put under the sedation of dreamgum or liquor. Sometimes, chewing the gum deadened the pain and other times it seemed to increase it. The only way to neutralize the pain-expanding effects then was to pour liquor down the patient.
They ate and slept while the guard watched at both entrances. Joe Miller was half unconscious most of the time, and Sam sat beside him and nursed him as best he could. Cyrano came back from his vigil at the door under the waterfall to report that it was night again outside. That was all he knew about the conditions outside. He had seen or heard no one through the waterfall.

Lothar and Sam were the least wounded. Sam decided that they should sneak out past the waterfall exit and spy. Cyrano protested that he should go, too, but Sam refused. Livy did not say anything, but she looked gratefully at Sam. He turned away; he did not want any thanks for sparing her mate.

He wondered if Gwenafra were dead or if she had been captured. Lothar said that she had disappeared during the last attack and that he had tried to get to her but had been driven back. He now felt ashamed of himself for not having done more, even though it had not been possible.

The two applied a dark stain all over their bodies and then went down the steel rungs of the shaft. The walls
were damp here, and the rungs were slippery with moisture. Electric lights illuminated the shaft.

They went out behind the waterfall, which roared and splashed at them. The ledge curved around, following the lower half of the dam, until it ran out about twenty yards from the end. Here they climbed down steel rungs to the junction of the dam wall and the earth. From there, they walked cautiously along the channel which had been cut out of the earth. The roots of the grass still stuck out of the walls of the channel. The roots went deeper than any cuts made so far; it seemed impossible to kill the grass.

The sky was bright with the jampack of huge stars and the extensive glowing gas clouds. They were able to proceed swiftly in the pale darkness. After a half a mile, they went at right angles to the canal, heading toward John’s ruined palace. Crouching in the shadows beneath the outflung branches of an iron tree, they looked down on the plains below. There were men and women in the huts around them. The men were the victors, and the women were the victims. Sam quivered when he heard the screams and the calls for help, but he tried to push them out of his mind. To rush into any hut
and try to rescue one woman was to throw away their
chances of doing any good for Parolando. And it would
certainly result in their being captured or killed.

Yet, if he heard Gwenafra’s voice, he knew that he
would go to her rescue. Or would he?

The fires in the open hearths and the smelters were
still blazing, and men and women were working in them.
Evidently, Hacking had already put his slaves to work.
Many guards stood around the buildings, but they were
drinking liquor and ethyl alcohol.

The plains were well lit for as far as he could see with
huge bonfires. Around them were many men and
women, drinking and laughing. Occasionally a struggling
and screaming woman was carried off into the
shadows. Sometimes, she was not taken away.

Sam and Lothar walked down the hill as if they
owned it, but they did not go near the buildings or the
fires.

Nobody had challenged them, though they had come
within twenty yards of a number of patrols. Most of the
enemy seemed to be celebrating the victory with purple
passion or any other liquor they had been able to get
from the supplies of their prisoners. The exceptions were the Wahhabi Arabs, whose religion forbade drinking alcohol. And there were a few blacks who were not on duty but who were abstemious. These were disciples of Hacking, who did not drink.

Whatever the laxity now, discipline had been maintained during the day. The corpses had been taken away, and a big stockade of poles removed from other buildings had been set up on the plain just beside the first of the hills. Though Sam could not see within it, he surmised from the guard towers around it that prisoners were within it.

The two strolled along, staggering now and then as if they were drunk. They passed within twenty feet of three short dark men who spoke a strange language. Sam could not identify it, though it sounded “African.” He wondered if these were not eighteenth-century Dahomeans.

They walked boldly between a nitric acid factory and an excrement-treatment building and out onto the plain. And they stopped. Twenty yards ahead, Firebrass was in a bamboo cage so narrow that he could not sit down
in it. His hands were tied behind him.

On a big X-frame of wood, upside down, his legs tied to the upper parts of the X and his arms to the lower members, was Göring.

Sam looked around. A number of men, talking and drinking, stood in the big doorway of the excrement plant. Sam decided not to go any closer or to try to talk to Firebrass. He longed to know why he was in the cage, but he did not dare to ask him. It was necessary to find out all he could and then get back to the hideout inside the dam. So far, the situation looked hopeless. It was best to sneak out during the rains and leave the country. He could blow up the dam and wash out everything, including the forces of Soul City, but he did not want to lose the boat. As long as he had a chance to get that back, he would let the dam alone.

They went on by Firebrass’ cage, hoping he would not see them and call to them. But he stood bent over, leaning his head against the bamboo bars. Göring groaned once. They kept on going and soon were around the corner of the building.

Their slow and seemingly drunken wanderings took
them near a big building that had been occupied by Fred Rolfe, King John’s supporter on the Council. The number of armed men on guard around it convinced Sam that Hacking was inside it.

It was a one-story house of lodgepole-pine logs and bamboo. Its windows were unblinded, and the light from within showed people inside. Suddenly, Lothar gripped Sam’s arm and said, “There she is! Gwenafra!”

The torchlight shone on her long honey-colored hair and very white skin. She was standing by the window and talking to someone. After a minute, she moved away, and the bushy hair and black face of Elwood Hacking moved across the bright square. Sam felt sick. Hacking had taken her for his woman for the night.

Gwenafra had not looked frightened. She had seemed relaxed, but Gwenafra, though volatile and uninhibited most of the time, could be self-restrained when the occasion demanded.

He pulled Lothar away.

“There’s nothing we can do now, and you’d be throwing away any chance she might have at all.”

They drifted around for a while, observing the other
factories and noting that the bonfires stretched both ways along the walls as far as their eye could detect. In addition to the Soul Citizens, there were the Ulmaks and a number of Orientals. Sam wondered if these could be the Burmese, Thai, and Ceylonese New Stone Age peoples living across The River from Selinujo.

To get out of Parolando, they would have to go over the wall. And they would have to steal several small boats if they were to get down The River to Selinujo. They had no idea about what had happened to Publiujo or Tifonujo, but they suspected that these countries would be next on Hacking’s list. To escape just to the north to Chernsky’s Land was foolish. Iyeyasu would be moving on that as soon as he found out about the invasion here, if he had not already done that.

It was ironic that they would flee to the very country the citizens of which had been forbidden entrance to Parolando.

They decided they would return to the dam now, tell what they had seen, and make plans. The best chance to get away would be when it rained.

They rose and started to walk about, skirting the huts
which housed the enemy and the captive women.

They had just passed into the shade of a gigantic iron tree when Sam felt something tighten around his neck from behind. He tried to yell, to turn around, to struggle, but the big hand squeezed, and he became unconscious.
He awoke gasping and coughing, still under the iron tree. He started to get up, but a deep voice growled, “None o’ that! Sit still, or I’l split yer skull with this ax!”

Sam looked around, Lothar, his hands tied behind him and a gag in his mouth, was sitting propped up under a half-grown fir tree sixty feet away. The man who had spoken was a very big man with excessively broad shoulders, a deep chest, and brawny arms. He wore a black kilt and black cape, and he held the handle of a medium-sized ax. Sheaths at his belt held a steel tomahawk and a steel knife, and a Mark I pistol was stuck in his belt.

He said, “You be Sam Clemens?”

“That’s right,” Sam said, his voice low, also. “What does this mean? Who are you?”

The big man jerked a head full of thick hair at Lothar. “I moved him away so he couldn’t hear what we have
to say. A man we both know sent me.”

Sam was silent for a minute and then he said, “The Mysterious Stranger?”

The big man grunted. “Yes. That’s what he said you called him. Stranger’s good enough. I guess you know what it’s all about, so there’s not much use us jawing too long about it. You satisfied that I’ve talked with him?”

“I’d have to be,” Sam said. “It’s obvious that you’ve met him. You’re one of the Twelve he’s picked. It was a he, wasn’t it?”

“I didn’t jump him to find out,” the man said. “I tell you, this child ain’t ever run up against a human, red, black, or white, that ever threw a scare-fit into me. But that Stranger, he’s the one that’d make a grizzly scoot just by looking at him. Not that I’m afraid of him, you understand, it’s just that he makes me feel...strange. Like I was a feather-plucked bluejay.

“Enough of that. My handle’s Johnston. Might as well give you my history, since it’ll save a lot of jawing later. John Johnston. I was born in New Jersey about 1827, I reckon, and died in Los Angeles in the
veterans’ hospital in 1900. Between times, I was a trapper in the Rocky Mountains. Up to when I came to this River, I killed me hundreds of Injuns, but I ain’t never had to kill a white man, not even a Frenchman. Not till I got here. Since then, well, I collected quite a few white scalps.”

The man stood up and moved out into the starlight. His hair was dark but looked as if it would be a bright red in the noonday sun.

“I talk a hell of a lot more’n I used to,” he said. “You can’t get away from people in this valley. People give a child bad habits.”

They went over to Lothar. On the way, Sam said, “How’d you happen to get here? And at this time?”

“The Stranger told me where to find you, told me about you and your big boat, the Misty Tower and all that. Why hash it all over? You know. I agreed to find you and go with you on your boat. Why not? I don’t like being set down here. There ain’t no elbow room; you can’t turn around without knocking noses. I was about thirty thousand miles upRiver when I wake up one night, and there’s that man sitting in the shadows.
We had a long talk with him doing most of it. Then I got up and set out. I heard about some of what was going on here way up The River. I snuck into here while the fighting was still going on, and I been looking for you ever since. I listened to them blacks talking; they said they couldn’t find your body. So I been skulking around, seeing what I could see. Once, I had to kill me one a those Ayrabs cause he stumbled across me. I was hungry, anyway.”

They had reached Lothar, but Sam straightened up at the last words. “Hungry?” he said. “You mean…?"

The man did not reply. Sam said, “Say, uh, you… you wouldn’t be that Johnston called ‘Liver Eating’ Johnston, would you? The Crow Killer?”

The voice rumbled, “I made me peace with the Crows and became their brother. And I quit eating human liver some time after. But a man has to eat.”

Sam shivered. He stooped down and untied Lothar’s bonds and removed the gag. Lothar was furious, but he was also curious. And, like Sam, he seemed to find Johnston a little awing. The man exuded a peculiar savage force. Without even half trying, Sam thought. I’d
hate to see him in action.

They walked back to the dam. Johnston did not say anything for a long time. Once, he disappeared, leaving Sam feeling strange and cold. Johnston was about six and a half feet tall and looked as if he weighed two hundred and eighty pounds, all bone and muscle. But he moved as silently as a tiger’s shadow.

Sam jumped. Johnston was back. Sam said, “What happened?”

Johnston said, “Never mind. You say you didn’t get around much. I been all over this place; I know the sitchytation passing well. Lots a your people to the north and the south got away over the walls. If they’d a stood up, they might’ve licked the blacks. But the blacks ain’t won by a long shot. Iyeyasu is getting ready to move against them. I wouldn’t be surprised none if he invades tonight. I scouted around his place some before I came here. He ain’t going to put up with the blacks owning all this iron and the boat. He will take it away from them or know why.”

Sam groaned. It made no difference whether Hacking or Iyeyasu had the boat if he couldn’t get it.
But by the time they were inside the dam, he felt better. Maybe the two forces would destroy each other, and the Parolandanoj who’d fled could come back and take over. All wasn’t lost yet.

Moreover, the appearance of the Herculean Liver Eating Johnston heartened him. The Mysterious Stranger had not entirely abandoned him. He was still planning, and he had sent a damn good man for fighting, if the stories about him could be believed. Johnston was the sixth man the Stranger had chosen. The other six would show up sometime. But then one had been lost. Odysseus had disappeared.

Still, he could show up again. The River was a great place for bad pennies, if you could call The Twelve that. They were bad for somebody. For the Stranger’s people, the Ethicals, Sam hoped.

In the dam, Johnston had to be introduced and the situation explained. Joe Miller, wrapped in towels, sat up and shook hands with Johnston. And Johnston, awe in his voice, said, “Night and day, this man-child seed many queer things. But I ain’t never seed one like you. You didn’t have to crush my hand, friend.”
“I didn’t try,” Joe said. “You look pretty big and thtrong to me. Bethideth, I been thick.”

About half an hour before the rains, they moved out. The land was relatively quiet by then. The celebrators had gone to bed, and everybody had cleared away from the fires in expectation of the rain. But the guard towers and the factories were full of enemy guards, and these had stopped drinking. Apparently, Hacking had called a halt to it.

Johnston, like a giant ghost, drifted away while they leaned against the side of the sulfuric acid factory. Ten minutes later, he was suddenly beside them.

“I been giving those blacks the ear,” he said. “That Hacking is shore one smart nigger. All that drinking and whooping it up and staggering around, why, that’s all put on! That’s fer the benefit of spies from Iyeyasujo. Hacking knows the Jap is going to attack tonight, and he’s making it look like it’s gonna be easy. But his men are worried. They’re short of gunpowder.”

Sam was startled by the news. He asked Johnston if he had overheard anything else.

“Yeah, I heard a couple of them Citizens talking
about why Hacking decided he had to attack us. He knew Iyeyasu was going to do it, so he decided he had to jump the gun. If he didn’t, the Jap would have control of the metal and the amphibians and everything, and he’d just conquer Soul City next and then have everything. Them jackasses was laughing fit to kill. They said it was King John arranged with Hacking to take over. And then Hacking blew up King John in his own house because he didn’t trust John. Said John was a traitor, and even if he wasn’t, he was a whitey and couldn’t be trusted.”

Sam said, “But why in hell would John do that to us? What did he have to gain?”

“Hacking and John was gonna conquer all the land for a hundred miles along The River and then split it. John was gonna rule the white half, and Hacking was gonna rule the black half. Half and half, with the two sharing everything equal. They was gonna build two boats, two of everything.”

“What about Firebrass? Why’s he in the cage?”

“Dunno, but somebody did call him a traitor. And that kraut, what’s his name, Herring....”
“Göring.”

“Yeah. Well, it wasn’t Hacking was to blame for his being tortured. Some a them Wahhabi Ayrabs did it. They’s got it in for the Second Chancers, you know, and they got him and tortured him, with the help a some of them African niggers, the Dahomeans, who used to torture a dozen people before breakfast every day, according to what I heard. By the time Hacking heard of it and stopped it, Göring was dying. But he talked to Hacking, called him his soul brother and said he forgave him. Said he’d see him later along The River. Hacking was pretty shook up about it, from what his men said.”

Sam digested the news, which set the teeth of his stomach even more on edge. He was so upset he couldn’t even get any amusement from Hacking’s double cross of the champion double-crosser, King John. He did have to admire Hacking’s statesmanship and perception, however. Hacking had realized there was only one way to deal with John, and he had taken that way. But then Hacking did not have Sam Clemens’ conscience.

The news changed everything. Apparently, Iyeyasu
was on the way now, which meant that Sam’s plans to sneak out during the rains would not work. The Soul Citizens were too alert.

“What’s the matter, Sam?” Livy said. She was sitting near him and looking sadly at him.

“I think it’s all up with us.”

“Oh, Sam!” she replied. “Where’s your manhood? It isn’t all up with us! You get depressed so easily if things don’t go your way all the time! Why, this is the greatest opportunity you could ask for to get your boat back! Let Hacking and Iyeyasu destroy each other and then take over. Just sit back up in the hills until they have clawed each other to death and then jump on them while they’re gasping out their last!”

Sam said angrily, “What are you talking about? Jump on them with fifteen men and women?”

“No, you stupe! You have at least five hundred prisoners in that stockade and God knows how many more in other stockades. And you have thousands who ran away to Černskujo and Publiujo!”

“How can I get hold of them now?” Sam said. “It’s too late! The attack will be launched in a few hours, you
can bet on that! Besides, the refugees were probably put in stockades, too! For all I know, Chernsky and Publius Crassus may be in cahoots with Hacking!"

“You’re still the same paralyzed pessimist I knew on Earth,” she said. “Oh, Sam, I still love you, in a way, that is. I still like you as a friend, and. . . .”

“Friend!” he said so loudly that the others jumped. Cyrano said, “Morbleu!” and Johnston hissed, “Shet up, you want them black Injuns to get us?”

“We were lovers for years,” he said.

“Not always, by a long shot,” she said. “But this is no place for a discussion of our failures. I don’t intend to thrash those out, anyway. It’s too late. The point is, do you or do you not want your boat?”

“Of course I do,” he said fiercely. “What do you think. . . .?”

“Then get off your dead ass, Sam!” she said.

From anybody else, the remark would have been unremarkable. But from her, his fragile, soft-voiced, clean-speeched Livy, it was unthinkable. But she had said it, and now that he thought back on it, there had
been times on Earth, which he had suppressed in his memory, when...

“The lady makes a powerful lot of sense!” Johnston rumbled.

He had far more important things to think about. But the really important things were best recognized by the unconscious, and it must have been this that sent the thought. For the first time, he understood, really understood, with the cells of his body, from the brain on down, that Livy had changed. She was no longer his Livy. She had not been for a long time; perhaps she had not been for some years on Earth before her death.

“What do you say, Mr. Clemens?” the mountain man rumbled.

Sam gave a deep sigh, as if he were breathing out the last fragments of Olivia Langdon Clemens de Bergerac, and said, “Here’s what we do.”

The rains lashed down; thunder and lightning made the skies and the land hideous for a half hour. Johnston appeared out of the rain with two bazookas and four rockets tied together on his broad back. Then he disappeared again and a half hour later was back with
some throwing knives and tomahawks, all of steel, and some new blood, not his, splashed on his arms and chest.

The clouds had evaporated. The land was bright silver under the magnificent stars, as big as apples, as numerous as cherries on a tree in season, as luminous as jewels before electric lights. Then it got colder, and they shivered under the iron tree. A thin mist formed over The River; within fifteen minutes, it was so thick that the waters and the grailstones and the high walls along the banks could not be seen. A half hour later, Iyeyasu struck. The big boats and the small boats, crammed with men and weapons, came from across The River, where the Sauks and Foxes had once ruled, from the northern part of the ex-Ulmak territory, from the land where the Hottentots and Bushmen had once lived in peace. And the main bulk came from the right bank of The River, from the three lands where Iyeyasu was now lord.

Iyeyasu attacked at ten points along the Riverfront walls. Mines blew up the walls, and men poured through the breaches. The number of rockets shot in the first ten minutes was awesome. Iyeyasu must have been
saving them for a long time. The three amphibians of the defenders lumbered up, their steam machine guns chuffing and expelling the plastic bullets in garden hose fashion. The carnage they made was great, but Iyeyasu launched a surprise. Rockets with wooden warheads containing jellied alcohol (made from soap plus wood alcohol) struck all around the three armored vehicles and made direct hits on each at least twice. The crude napalm spread fiercely over the vehicles, and if the burning stuff did not get inside the vehicles, it seared the lungs of the men inside.

Sam was shaken by the sight, but not so much that he did not tell Lothar to remind him of this when it was all over, if either of them was still around.

“They have to be made more airtight, and we’ll have to install a closed-circuit air system, like Firebrass described,” he said.

Johnston appeared as unexpectedly as if he had stepped out of a door in the night, and behind him was Firebrass. The man looked exhausted and as if he were in pain, but he still managed to grin at Sam. He was, however, trembling.
“Hacking was told that I was betraying him,” Firebrass said. “And he believed his informant. Who was, by the way, our esteemed and always reliable King John. John told him that I was selling him down The River, that I had revealed everything to you so I could become chief of your air force. Hacking would not believe that I was dickering with you just to string you along. I can’t blame him too much. I should have sent word through our spies what I was doing. That I didn’t convince him that I wasn’t double-crossing him didn’t surprise me.”

“Were you?” Sam said.

Firebrass grinned. “No, I wasn’t, though I was mightily tempted. But why should I betray him when I’d been promised I could be head flier after Hacking took over the boat? The truth is, Hacking was eager to believe John. He doesn’t like me because I’m not his idea of what a soul brother should be. And I had too easy a life according to him. He resented it because I never lived in a ghetto and I had every advantage he didn’t have.”

“The job of chief engineer can still be yours,” Sam
said. “I’ll admit that I’m relieved about not having to promise you the captaincy of the air force. But you can still fly, if you want to.”

“That’s the best offer I’ve had since I died,” Firebrass said. “I’ll take it.”

He moved closer to Sam and whispered in his ear. “You would have had to take me along in some capacity anyway. I’m one of The Twelve!”
Sam felt as if a cold rod had been plunged through him from the top of his head down.

“‘The Ethical? The Stranger?’”

“Yes. He said you called him the Mysterious Stranger.”

“Then you were betraying Hacking?”

“That little speech I just made was for public consumption,” Firebrass said. “Yes, I did betray Hacking, if you insist on using that word. But I regard myself as an espionage agent for a higher authority. I have no intention of worrying about all-black or all-white states on The River, when I can find out how and why we, the whole human race, were put here. I want answers to my questions, as Karamazov once said. All this white-black turmoil is trivial on this planet, no matter how important it was on Earth. Hacking must have sensed that I thought that, though I tried to conceal it.”
Sam did not recover from the shock for some time. Meanwhile, the battle raged on the plain with the Soul Citizens getting the worst of it. Though they cost the invaders three men for one, they were pushed back within a half an hour. Sam decided that it was time for them to act, and they trotted off toward the stockade where the Parolando prisoners were kept. Lothar fired two rockets into the gates of the stockade, and before the smoke had cleared, the fifteen charged through the blasted gates. Cyrano and Johnston did most of the work in killing the fifteen guards. Cyrano was a demon with lightning for a sword, and Johnston downed four men with thrown tomahawks and three with thrown knives. He broke two legs and a chest with a foot like iron. The prisoners were directed to the armory, where bows and arrows and swords were still in supply.

Sam sent two men each to the north and south to go over the walls and try to contact the Parolandanoj there.

Then he led the rest back up into the hills. They would camp by the dam until they saw how the battle was going. Sam did not have the slightest idea of what they should do. He told Cyrano he would have to play
it by ear. He had to repress the impulse to remark that he was doing this even though Cyrano was tone deaf.

Afterward, Sam thanked whoever there was to thank that he had not camped on top of the dam itself. Instead, he had sat down on a knoll above and to the left side of the dam, facing outward. He had a better view of the hills and the plains, where the rockets were still exploding but were not as numerous as in the beginning. The starlight glimmered on the waters of the big lake behind the dam as if all was peace and quiet in the world.

Suddenly, Johnston leaped up and said, “Looky there! Yonder! Atop a the dam!”

Three dark figures had emerged from the water onto the dam. They ran toward the land. Sam told the others to withdraw behind the great trunk of the iron tree. Joe Miller and Johnston seized the three as they raced up to the tree. One tried to stab Joe, and Joe squeezed the neck and the blood spurted out from broken veins and arteries. The others were knocked out. By the time they regained consciousness, they did not have to tell Sam what they had done. And he guessed that they had
done so at the order of King John.

The earth shook under their feet, and the irontree leaves rattled like dishes in a pantry. The white wall of the dam flew outward with a gigantic cloud of smoke and a roar that pushed in their eardrums. The enormous chunks of concrete flew through the smoke like white birds above a factory chimney. They tumbled over and over and struck the ground far ahead of the waters. The lake was no longer the peaceful and quiet glimmer of a wonderful world to come. It seemed to hurl itself forward. The roar as it raced down the canyon which Sam’s men had dug with so much sweat and time deafened the watchers again.

The water, hundreds of thousands of tons, funneled by the canyon, rammed through the earthen walls, tearing out great chunks of it. The sudden withdrawal also removed a great amount of earth around the lake’s shores, so much so that the watchers had to scramble for even higher ground. And the thousand-foot-high irontree, its two-hundred-foot-deep roots abruptly exposed, its foundation partly dug away, toppled over. It seemed to take a long time falling, and the explosions of enormous roots breaking and the whistling of air
through the huge leaves and the vines covering it terrified the humans. They had thought they were far enough away, but even though the giant tree was falling away from them, they were threatened by eruptions of roots from the earth.

The tree struck with a crash on the other side of the lake and tore out the overhanging dirt and continued on down into the emptying lake. It slid out entirely from the root anchors on the banks and went on top first into the waters. These were whirling around and around, and, picking up the enormous tree as if it were a toothpick, the waters carried it down the canyon for a half a mile before it became wedged between the two walls of the canyon.

The waters roared out in a wall at least a hundred feet high by the time it had hit the plains. Its front must have borne a tangle of half-grown trees and bamboo plants, huts, people, and debris. It flashed across the mile and a half of plain, spreading out but channeled, for a few minutes, by the cyclopean secondary walls that Sam had built to defend the factories and the Riverboat, but which had proved useless in two attacks.
Everything was picked up and carried on out into The River. The factories crumbled as if they were made of cookies. The gigantic Riverboat was lifted up like a toy boat cast into the ocean surf. It rode out into The River, pitching, and then was sunk in darkness and turmoil. Sam threw himself on the ground and clawed at the grass. His boat was lost! Everything was lost, factories, mines, amphibians, airplanes, smithies, armories, and his crew. But worst of all, the Riverboat was lost. The dream was shattered; the great shining jewel of his dream had been smashed.

The grass was cold and wet in his face. His fingers felt as if they were fastened in the flesh of the earth and would never come free again. But Joe’s huge hand lifted him up and sat him down as if he were a dummy. Joe’s monstrous hairy body was pressed close to his, warming him. And Joe’s grotesque face with the shelving brows and the absurdly long nose was by him.

“They’re all gone!” Joe said. “Jethuth! What a thight! There ain’t nothing left, Tham!”

The plain was buried under a whirl and toss of waters, but in fifteen minutes the waters had drained off.
The River had resumed its normal appearance along the shores of Parolando, though it must have been swollen downstream.

The great buildings and the boat in its scaffoldings were gone. The cyclopean walls on the sides, a mile apart, were gone. There were little lakes here and there where the mines and the basements of the factories had been. The vast weight of water had gouged out part of the plain where it had been dug up. But the roots of the grasses were so deep, so tough, and so thickly intertwined that even the scrape of hundreds of thousands of tons of water had not ripped the earth out. The stone and earth walls along the banks had been swept away as if they were sand.

The skies paled, and the starlit darkness became gray. The great fleet of the invaders was gone, somewhere far down The River, or under it, broken, smashed, fragments floating or half hulls upside down. The two armies on the plain and the sailors were all dead, crushed by the weight of the water, drowned, rubbed into nothing or squeezed out like toothpaste.

But Parolando extended for ten miles along The
River, and the lake had, after all, only raged across a two-mile-broad area. Its main damage had been in the middle of Parolando, where it had carried everything out that stood within a half-mile-wide area. Those on the edges had been drowned and the buildings smashed or only submerged briefly.

Dawn brought with it a thousand men in boats or over the walls of Chernsky’s Land from the north.

At their head was King John.

Sam drew up his men in battle formation with Joe Miller in the center, but King John limped forward, his hand held out in sign of peace. Sam went forward to talk to him. Even after John had explained what he had done, Sam expected to be killed. But later he realized that John needed him and Firebrass and others if he were going to get the boat rebuilt. Also, he would be taking a perverted pleasure in keeping Sam alive while Sam wondered when the dagger in the night would come.

As it turned out, not everything had to be started from scratch again. The boat, almost entirely undamaged, was found beached on a hill across The
River a mile down. It had been deposited as gently as a cat’s footstep by the withdrawing waters. The work of getting the great hull back was not easy, but it took much less time than making another one.

John explained more than once to Sam what he had done, but the deviousnesses and the two times two double crosses were so complicated that Sam could never see the picture as a whole. John had made a deal to betray Sam, knowing full well that Hacking would betray him also. John would have been disappointed if Hacking had not tried to stab him in the back. He would have lost all his faith in human nature.

John had made a deal with Iyeyasu to help him invade after Hacking’s invasion. Iyeyasu liked the idea that Hacking would weaken his forces while taking Parolando. At the last moment, John had made a deal with Publius Crassus, Tai Fung, and Chernsky that they would help him mop up on Iyeyasu’s forces, which would be shattered by the waters released by the blown-up dam.

John had sent the three men to set off the explosives in the dam when the greatest number of invaders and
defenders would be concentrated between the funneling secondary-defense walls. Before that happened, John had fled in his boat, hidden by the fog.

“Then you weren’t in your palace when the cannons opened up on it?” Sam said.

“No,” John replied, smiling his cat’s smile. “I was miles to the north, traveling to meet Iyeyasu. You have never thought much of me, Samuel, but you should get down on your knees now and kiss my hand in gratitude. Without me, you would have lost all.”

“If you had told me Hacking was going to invade, I could have kept everything,” Sam said. “We could have ambushed Hacking.”

The sun came up and struck the tawniness of John’s hair and the peculiar pale-blue of his eyes. “Ah, yes, but Iyeyasu would still have been a formidable problem. Now he’s gone, and there is little to keep us from ruling all the land we need, including the bauxite and platinum of Soul City and the iridium and tungsten of Selinujo. I presume you have no objections to conquering those two states?”

There was a bonanza in the aftermath. Hacking was
taken prisoner, and Gwenafra was found alive. Both had been pushed during the fighting into the hills to the west. Hacking was getting ready to lead a charge back down the hills when the edge of the waters deluged his part. Gwenafra escaped, though she almost drowned. Hacking had been hurled against a tree. Both his legs and one arm were broken, and he was bleeding internally.

Sam and John hastened to where Hacking lay under an irontree. Gwenafra cried when she saw them and embraced Sam and Lothar. She seemed to have given Sam a much longer embrace than she did Lothar, which was not entirely unexpected, since she and Lothar had been quarreling violently for the last few months.

John wanted to finish Hacking off with some refined tortures, preferably as soon after breakfast as possible. Sam objected strongly. He knew that John could have his way if he insisted, since his men outnumbered Sam’s by fifty to one. But Sam was past being cautious, at that moment, anyway. And John backed away. He needed Sam and the men whose loyalty he commanded.

“You had a dream, White Sam,” Hacking said in a
weak voice. “Well, I had one, too. A land where brothers and sisters could loaf and invite their souls. Where we’d be all black. You wouldn’t know what that means. No white devils, no white eyes. Just black soul brothers. It would have been as near heaven as you can get in this hell of a world. Not that we wouldn’t have had trouble, no place without trouble, man. But there wouldn’t have been any white-man trouble. It’d be all ours. But that isn’t to be.”

“You could have had your dream,” Sam said. “If you’d waited. After the boat was built, we’d have left the iron to whoever could take it. And then….”

Hacking grimaced. Sweat covered his black skin and his face was tight with pain. “Man, you must be out of your skull! You really think I believed that story about you sailing off on this quest for the Big Grail? I knew you was going to use that big boat to conquer us blacks and lock those chains around us again. An Old South whitey like you….”

He closed his eyes. Sam said, “You are wrong! If you knew me, if you’d taken the trouble to know me instead of stereotyping me....”
Hacking opened his eyes and said, “You’d lie to a nigga even when he was on his deathbed, wouldn’t you? Listen! That Nazi, Göring, he really shook me up. I didn’t tell them to torture him, just kill him, but those fanatical Arabs, you know them. Anyway, Göring gives me a message. *Hail and farewell, soul brother,* or something like that. *I forgive you, because you know not what you do.* Something like that. Ain’t that a crock? A message of love from a damn Nazi! But you know, he had changed! And he could be right. Maybe all them Second Chancers are right. Who knows? Sure seems stupid to bring us up from the dead, give us our youth back, just so some can kick and some can hurt all over again. Stupid, isn’t it?”

He stared up at Sam and then said, “Shoot me, will you? Put me out of my pain. I’m really suffering.”

Lothar stepped up beside Sam and said, “After what you did to Gwenafra, I’ll be glad to.”

He pointed the muzzle of the big flintlock at Hacking’s head.

Hacking grinned painfully and muttered, “Rape on principle, mother! I swore off that on Earth, but that
woman just brought out the devil in me! Besides, so what? What about all those black slave women you white mothers raped?”

As Sam walked away, the pistol boomed. He jumped, but he kept on walking. It was the kindest thing that Lothar could have done for Hacking. Tomorrow, he would be walking along the banks of The River somewhere far away. He and Sam might even see each other again, although Sam was not looking forward to that.

Lothar, stinking of gunpowder, caught up with him.

“I should have let him suffer. But old habits are hard to break. I wanted to kill him, so I did. That black devil just smiled at me. Then I spread his smile all over him.”

“Don’t say any more,” Sam replied. “I’m sick enough. I’m about to chuck the whole thing and settle down with a steady job of missionarying. The only ones whose suffering meant anything today were the Second Chancers.”

“You’ll get over that,” Lothar said, and he was right. But it took three years.

The land was again like a shell-pocked battlefield,
stinking with fumes and black with smoke. But the great Riverboat was completed. There was nothing to do to it now except to try it out. Even the last touch, the painting of the Riverboat’s name in big black letters on the white hull, had been done. On both sides of the hull, ten feet above the waterline, were the letters NOT FOR HIRE.

“What does that mean, Sam?” he had been asked by many.

“It means just what it says, contrary to most words in print or speech,” Sam said. “The boat is no man’s to hire. It’s a free boat and its crew are free souls. No man’s.”

“And why is the boat’s launch called Post No Bills?”

“That comes from a dream I had,” Sam would say. “Somebody was trying to put up advertising on it, and I told him that the launch was built for no mercenary purpose. What do you think I am, advance agent for P. T. Barnum? I said.”

There was more to the dream, but Sam told no one except Joe about this.

“But the man who was pasting up those garish
posters, advertising the coming of the greatest Riverboat of them all and the greatest Riverboat show of them all, was I!” Sam said. “I was both men in the dream!”

“I don’t get it, Tham,” Joe said.

Sam gave up on him.
The twenty-sixth anniversary of Resurrection Day was the day that the side-wheeler *Not For Hire* first turned its paddles. It was about an hour after the grailstones flamed to charge the breakfast grails. The cables and cap connected to the grailstone had been removed and the cables wound up within the hold through a port in the forward section on the starboard side. The grails had been removed from the stone a mile north and rushed to the big boat in the amphibious, armored, steam-driven launch, the *Post No Bills*. The fabulous Riverboat, gleaming white with red and black and green trimmings, moved out from the canal and into The River behind a huge breakwater on its starboard side. This deflected the current so that the boat would not be swung to the south as it emerged from the canal and so carried into the edge of the canal’s mouth.

Whistles blowing, iron bells clanging, the passengers cheering as they leaned over the railings, the people on the banks shouting, the magnificent paddle wheels
churning, the *Not For Hire* moved with stately grace out into The River.

The Riverboat had an overall length of four hundred and forty feet and six inches. The beam over the paddle-wheel guards was ninety-three feet. The mean draft loaded was twelve feet. The giant electric motors driving the paddle wheels delivered ten thousand shaft horsepower and enough power left to take care of all the boat’s electrical needs, which were many. Top speed, theoretically, was forty-five miles an hour in still water. Going upstream against the fifteen-mile-an-hour current, it would be thirty. Going downstream, it would be sixty. The boat would be going up The River most of the time and cruising at fifteen miles an hour relative to the ground.

There were four decks: the so-called boiler deck, the main deck, the hurricane deck, and the landing deck. The pilothouse was at the fore edge of the hurricane deck, and the long texas, containing the captain’s and chief officers’ quarters, was behind the pilothouse. However, the pilothouse was itself double-decked. It was set forward of the two tall but thin smokestacks which rose thirty feet high. Firebrass had advised
against the stacks, because the smoke from the big boilers (used only to heat water and to drive the machine guns) could be piped out on the side. But Sam had snorted and said, “What do I care about air resistance? I want beauty! And beauty is what we’ll get! Whoever heard of a Riverboat without tall, graceful, impressive smokestacks! Have you no soul, brother?”

There were sixty-five cabins, each about twelve by twelve with snap-up beds and tables and folding chairs. Each cabin had a toilet and a washbasin with hot and cold running water, and there was a shower for every six cabins.

There were three big lounges, one in the texas, one on the hurricane deck, and one on the main deck. These held pool tables, dart games, gymnastic equipment, card tables, a movie screen, and a stage for dramas or musicals, and the main deck lounge held a podium for the orchestra.

The upper deck of the pilothouse was luxuriously furnished with carved oaken chairs and tables covered with red and white and black Riverdragon-fish leather.
The pilot sat in a large and comfortable swivel chair before the instrument board. On this was a bank of small closed-circuit TV screens, giving him views of the control center of the boat. Before him was a microphone which enabled him to speak to anybody on the boat. He controlled the boat with two levers on a small movable board before him. The left stick controlled the port wheel; the right, the starboard. A screen before him was a radar indicator used at night. Another screen showed him the depth of the water from the bottom of the boat as measured by sonar. A toggle on the instrument board could switch the piloting to automatic, though the rule was that a pilot had to be on duty at all times.

Sam was dressed in bleached fish-leather sandals, a white kilt, a white cape, and a white officer’s cap of plastic and leather. He wore a bleached leather belt with a bleached holster containing a ponderous Mark II .69 four-shooter pistol and a bleached sheath with a ten-inch knife.

He paced back and forth, a big green cigar in his mouth, his hands held straight down except when he removed the cigar. He watched the pilot, Robert Styles,
steering the boat for the first time. Styles was an old Mississippi pilot, a handsome youth, no liar, though given to inflating facts. When he had appeared about two years before, Sam had been overcome with joy. For one of the few times in his life, he had wept. He had known Rob Styles when they were both Mississippi pilots.

Styles was nervous, as anybody would be the first time, even the steel-nerved Captain Isaiah Sellers of ancient Mississippi fame. There was nothing to piloting the boat. A one-eyed Sunday school teacher with a hangover could do it, his six-year-old child could do it, once he got the hang of the two sticks. Push forward for increased speed, put in the middle position to stop the wheels, pull back to reverse the wheels. To steer the boat to port, pull back a little on the port stick and forward a little on the starboard stick. To steer to starboard, do the reverse.

But it took some practice before the proper coordination was achieved.

Luckily, there was no memory work involved in piloting a boat on this River. There were no islands, no
sandbars, and there would be few logs with snags. If the boat got too close to shallow water, sonar activated an alarm bell. If a boat was ahead at night, or a log hidden in the water, the radar or sonar would indicate it and a red light would flash.

Sam watched Styles for half an hour while the banks floated by and the thousands of people on them waved and cheered. Or cursed, since many were disappointed because they had been eliminated from the crew by the lottery. But he couldn’t hear the curses.

Then Sam took over the piloting, and, after another half hour, asked John if he would like to try. John was dressed entirely in black, as if he were determined to do just the opposite of whatever Sam did. But he took the sticks and did well for an ex-king who had never done a lick of work in his life and had always let inferiors do whatever steering was necessary.

The boat sailed up past the dead Iyeyasu’s kingdom, now split into three states again, and then Sam ordered the vessel turned back. Rob Styles got fancy and pivoted her “on a dime,” as he said, demonstrating her maneuverability. While the port wheel backed, the
starboard raced at full speed and the boat rotated as if stuck on a pin. Then she headed downstream. With the current and wind behind her, and the paddle wheels turning at maximum speed, the *Not For Hire* raced along at sixty miles an hour. But not for too long. Sam had Styles bring her in close to the shore, where the sonar indicated about one foot of clearance between hull and bottom on the port side. Even above the slapping of the wheels and the splashing of water and the whistling and clanging of bells, they could hear the crowds. The faces whizzed by as if in a dream.

Sam opened the fore ports of the pilothouse so they could feel the wind and increase their impression of speed.

The *Not For Hire* raced all the way downstream to Selinujo, and then it turned again. Sam wished, almost, that there was another boat that he could race against. But it was being in heaven to have the only metal, electrically powered Riverboat in existence. A man couldn't have everything, not even in the after-Earthlife.

During the return trip, the huge hatch in the stern was lowered, and the launch slipped out through the
entrance into The River. It cut back and forth at top speed and raced ahead of the mother boat. Its steam machine guns traced lines along the water, and the thirty steam guns on the *Not For Hire* shot back, though not at the launch.

The big three-place amphibian monoplane came out of the opening in the stern, too, and its wings were straightened out and locked, and then it took off. Firebrass was at the controls with his woman and Gwenafra as passengers.

A moment later, the tiny, one-seater open-cockpit scout-fighter was shot off the top of the texas by a steam catapult. Lothar von Richtofen took it up, the wood-alcohol-burning motor buzzing, and raced ahead until he was out of sight. Then he returned, climbed, and entertained with the first aerial acrobatics that the Riverworld had ever seen—to the best of Sam’s knowledge.

Lothar concluded with a dive at the end of which he fired four rockets into the water and then the twin machine guns. These were .80 caliber and shot aluminum bullets from aluminum cartridges. There were
one hundred thousand of these stored on the boat, and when they were all gone, they would not be replaced.

Lothar landed the tiny monoplane on the landing deck, the top of the texas, and the devices caught the hook trailed out by the plane. Even so, the whirling propeller stopped only ten feet from the smokestacks. Lothar took the plane up again and again landed. Then Firebrass returned in the amphibian, and he later took the wheeled plane up for one flight.

Sam looked down through the port front at the marines drilling on the fore part of the broad boiler deck. Under the midnoon sun, which heated the air to an estimated eighty degrees Fahrenheit, they marched back and forth and performed intricate maneuvers under Cyrano’s orders. Their silvery duralumin plumed helmets were like those of the ancient Romans. They wore gray-and-red-striped chainmail shirts which fell halfway down their thighs. Their legs were cased in leather boots. They carried rapiers and long knives and the Mark II pistols. They were the pistoleers only, however. The main part of the marines were watching the show; these were the bowmen and the rocketeers.
Seeing Gwenafra’s honey-colored head in the crowd on the main deck made him happy.

He saw Livy’s dark head near her, and he was unhappy.

Gwenafra, after another six months of jealousy-ridden life with von Richthofen, had accepted Sam’s offer and moved in with him. But Sam still could not see Livy without some pain of loss.

If it were not for Livy, and for John’s presence, he would have been as happy as he could be. But she would be with them throughout the possible forty years of the journey. And John, well, John made him uneasy and prowled through his nightmares.

John had been so willing to let Sam be the captain and so unhesitant about accepting the first mate’s position that Sam knew he was up to no good. But when would The Mutiny, as Sam thought of it, take place? It was inevitable that John would try to take over the full command of the Riverboat, and any intelligent man, knowing this, would have dumped him, one way or the other.

But Sam had been too conscience-stricken by his
killing of Bloodaxe. He could not commit another assassination, not even if he knew that John would not be permanently dead. A corpse was a corpse, and a double cross was a double cross.

The question was, when would John strike? At the beginning, or much later during the voyage, when Sam’s suspicions had been lulled?

Actually, the situation was intolerable. But then it was surprising how much intolerableness a man could tolerate.

A yellow-haired, near-giant entered the pilothouse. His name was Augustus Strubewell, he was John’s aide-de-camp, and he had been picked up by John during his sojourn in Iyeyasujo after Hacking’s invasion. He had been born in 1971 in San Diego, California, had been an All-American fullback, a captain of the U.S. Marines, decorated for bravery in the Middle East and South America, and had made a career in the movies and TV. He seemed a pleasant enough fellow, except that, like John, he bragged of his conquests among women. Sam did not trust him. Anybody who worked for John Lackland had to have something wrong with
Sam shrugged. He might as well enjoy himself for the moment. Why let anything rob him of the joy of the greatest day of his life?

He leaned out of the port and watched the marine drill team and the crowd. The sun sparkled on waves, and the breeze was cooling. If it became too warm, he could shut the ports and turn on the air conditioning. From the tall pole on the bow the flag of the *Not For Hire* flapped in the wind. It was square and bore a scarlet phoenix on a light-blue field. The phoenix symbolized the rebirth of mankind.

He waved at the people massed along the bank and pressed a button which set off a series of steam whistles and clanging of bells.

He drew in smoke from his fine cigar and stuck his chest out and paraded back and forth. Strubewell handed John a glass full of bourbon, and then he offered Sam another. Everybody in the pilothouse—Styles, the six other pilots, Joe Miller, von Richthofen, Firebrass, Publius Crassus, Mozart, Strubewell, and three other of John’s aides—took a glass.
“A toast, gentlemen,” John said in Esperanto. “To a long and happy journey and may we all get what we deserve.”

Joe Miller, standing near Sam, the top of his head almost touching the ceiling, held a glass containing about half a quart of bourbon. He sniffed at the amber liquor with his monstrous proboscis and then tasted it with the tip of his tongue.

Sam was just about to toss the four-ounce drink down when he saw Joe’s apish face grimace.

“What’s the matter, Joe?” he said.

“Thith thtuff hath thomething in it!”

Sam sniffed and could detect nothing but the most excellent of Kentucky’s best.

But when John and Strubewell and the others reached for their weapons, he threw the liquor in John’s face. Yelling, “It’s poison!” he dived for the floor.

Strubewell’s Mark II pistol boomed. The plastic bullet shattered against the bulletproof plastic of the port above Sam’s head.

Joe roared—he sounded like a lion suddenly
released from its cage—and he threw his liquor into Strubewell’s face.

The other aides fired once and then they fired again. The Mark II pistols were four-shot revolvers which electrically ignited the powder in the aluminum cartridges. They were even larger and heavier than the Mark I’s, but they could be fired much more swiftly, and cordite, not black gunpowder, propelled the plastic bullets.

The pilothouse became a fury of booming, deafening explosives, the scream of shattered plastic ricocheting, the shouts and screams of men, and the bellowing of Joe.

Sam rolled over, reached up, and flicked the automatic pilot switch. Rob Styles was on the floor, his arm almost torn off. One of John’s aides was dying in front of him. Strubewell went flying over him and banged against the glass and then fell on him. John was gone, fled down the ladder.

Sam crawled out from under Strubewell. Four of his pilots were dead. All of the aides, except for Strubewell, who was only unconscious, were dead.
Their necks had been broken or their jaws shattered by Joe. Mozart was crouched quivering in a corner. Firebrass was bleeding from the many plastic fragments, and Lothar was bleeding from a gash in his arm. One of the aides had struck him with a knife just before Joe twisted his head 180 degrees.

Sam arose shakily and looked out the port. The crowd watching the marines had dispersed, but not without leaving a dozen bodies behind. The marines on the boiler deck were firing at men shooting at them from around the sides of the main deck. Some of the fire seemed to be coming from the cabin ports in the main deck.

Cyrano stood with his rapidly dwindling crew of marines, shouting orders. Then John’s men charged, firing, and Cyrano went down. But he was up again, his sword silvery and then red. The enemy broke and ran away, and Cyrano ran after them. Sam shouted, “You fool! Go back!” but he was not heard, of course.

He tried to struggle out of his shock. John had slipped something into their drinks, poison or a sedative, and only Joe’s sub-humanly sensitive nose had
saved them from drinking and then keeling over and allowing John to take over the pilothouse with little trouble.

He looked out the starboard port. Only a half mile ahead was the huge breakwater behind which the boat was to anchor for the night. Tomorrow, the long journey would officially begin. *Would have begun*, he thought.

He flipped off the automatic pilot toggle switch and took the control sticks in his hands.

"Joe," he said, "I'm going to run this right up alongside the bank. I may even ground us. Get out the bullhorn. I'll tell the people ashore what's happened, and we'll get help."

He pulled back on the starboard stick and advanced the port stick.

"What's wrong?" he yelled.

The boat was proceeding straight on its course up The River, holding to a distance of about a hundred yards off the shore.

He moved the sticks back and forth, frantically, but
the boat did not deviate.

John's voice came from the intercom.

"It's no use, Samuel, Boss, Captain, swine! I have control of the boat. My engineer, the man who will be chief engineer, put in a duplicate set of controls...never mind where. I have cut off your controls, and the boat will go where I want it to. So you don't have any advantage at all. Now my men will storm the pilothouse and take you. But I would prefer that there be as little damage as possible. So, if you will just get off the boat, I will let you go unharmed. Provided, that is, that you can swim a hundred yards."

Sam raged and swore and pounded his fists on the instrument panel. But the boat continued on past the dock, while the crowds gathered there waved and cheered and wondered why the boat did not stop.

Lothar, looking out of the stern port, said, "They're trying to sneak up on us!" and he fired at a man who had appeared around the far end of the texas on the hurricane deck.

"We can't hold out long!" Firebrass said. "We don't have much ammunition!"
Sam looked at the fore ports. Some men and women had run out onto the boiler deck and then turned for a stand.

Livy was among them.

There was another charge. A man thrust at Cyrano, who was engaged in running his rapier through the man next to him. Livy tried to knock the blade aside with her pistol, which must have been empty, but the sword went into her stomach. She fell backward with the sword still sticking out of her. The man who had killed her died a second later, when Cyrano's rapier went through his throat.

Sam cried, "Livy! Livy!" and he was out through the door of the pilothouse and running down the ladder. Bullets screamed by him and smashed against the bulkheads and the ladder. He felt a stinging and then heard a shouting behind him, but he did not stop. He was vaguely aware that Joe Miller and the others had run out after him. Perhaps they were trying to rescue him or perhaps they knew that they might as well get out now before they were overwhelmed in the trap of the pilothouse.
There were corpses and wounded everywhere. John’s men had not been numerous; he had depended upon surprise, and it had not failed him. Dozens had been shot down in the first volleys, and dozens more had been shot during the panic. Many more had jumped into the water, seeing that there was no way of escape, no place to hide, and they were not armed.

Now the boat was turning into shore, its paddle wheels operating at full speed, the water flying, the wheels chuff-chuffing, the deck trembling. John was turning the boat into shore, where a number of heavily armed men and women awaited him.

These would be the disaffected, the people who were angered because the lottery had cut them out of a place on the crew. Once they got aboard, they would sweep away the few left in Sam’s party.

Sam had run along the hurricane deck after leaving the pilothouse ladder. He held a pistol with two shots left in it and his rapier in the other hand. He did not know how they had gotten into his hands; he had no memory of having removed them from his holster and sheath.
A face appeared at the edge of the deck on the ladder just ahead. He fired at it, and the face dropped back. He was on the edge of the deck then and shooting even as he leaned over to look down the ladder. The plastic bullet did not miss this time. The man’s chest erupted red, and he fell back down the ladder, taking two men with him. But others on the deck below raised their pistols, and he had to jump back. The volley missed him, though some bullets striking the edge blew apart and the fragments stung him on the legs.

Joe Miller, behind him, said, “Tham! Tham! There’th nothing to do but jump for it! They got uth thurrounded!”

Below, Cyrano, still wielding his rapier, holding off three men at one time, backed to the railing. Then his blade pierced a throat, the man fell, and Cyrano whirled and leaped over the railing. When he came up he began to swim strongly to get away from the starboard paddle wheel thrashing toward him.

Bullets struck the sides of the cabins behind Sam, and Lothar cried, “Jump, Sam! Jump!”
But they could not jump yet. They could not have cleared the main deck below, let alone the boiler deck.

Joe had already turned and was running with his great ax toward the men firing from behind the rear of the cabins along the hurricane deck. The bullets streaked toward him, wobbling, leaving a thin trail of smoke, but he was too far away to worry about their accuracy. And he was depending upon his terrifying aspect and his prowess, which they well knew, to panic them.

The others ran behind him until they came to the great paddle-wheel housing. This was about ten feet from the edge of the hurricane deck, and if they stood up on the railing and leaped out, they could grab hold of the big iron eyes through which cables had been secured when the housing had been lifted and then placed over the wheel by the crane.

They jumped, one after the other, while bullets screamed by. They grabbed the eye, their bodies banging into the side of the hard metal housing. But they pulled themselves up and onto the top of the housing and crawled over, stood up, and jumped out. The
water was thirty feet below, a height which would have made Sam hesitate under different conditions. This time, he went out, fell straight, holding his nose, and plunged into the water feet first.

He came up in time to see Joe jump off, not from the housing but from the main deck. He had fought down the ladder and out across the deck, scattering the pygmies before him. Even so, his hairy skin was splotched with blood. He went over the side in a dive with pistols booming and arrows streaking after him.

Sam dived then, because several of the steam machine guns had been depressed and the .80 caliber bullets were probing for him.

The boat turned back about two minutes later. John must have discovered that his chief enemy had escaped. By then, Sam was ashore and running, though he thought his legs would fold under him. The firing was not renewed. Perhaps John had changed his mind about killing him. He would want Sam to suffer, and Sam would suffer most if he were still at the site of his defeat.

John's voice boomed out from a bullhorn. “Farewell, Samuel! You fool! Thanks for building the Riverboat for
me! And I will change its name to one which will suit me better! I go now to enjoy the fruits of your labors! Think of me as much as you please! Farewell!”

His bullhorn-amplified laughter blasted Sam’s ears.

Sam came out of his hiding place in a hut and climbed the wall on the edge of the water. The boat had stopped and let down a long gangplank on cables to permit the traitors to come aboard. He heard a voice below him and looked down. There was Joe, his reddish hairs black with water except where the blood was starting to appear again.

“Lothar and Firebrath and Thyrano and Johnthton made it,” he said. “How you feel, Tham?”

Sam sat down on the hard-packed dirt and said, “If it would do any good, I’d kill myself. But this world is hell, Joe, genuine hell. You can’t even commit a decent suicide. You wake up the next day, and there you are with your problems stuck on you with glue or stuck… well, never mind.”

“What do ve do now, Tham?”

Sam did not reply for a long time. If he couldn’t have Livy, Cyrano could not have her, either. He could
endure the thought of having lost her if she were not where he could see her.

Later, the shame at exulting in Cyrano’s loss would come.

Not now. He was too stunned. The loss of the boat had been even a greater shock than seeing Livy killed.

After all these years of hard work, of grief, of betrayal, of planning, of hurting, of...of...

It was too much to bear.

Joe was grieved to see him cry, but he sat patiently by until Sam’s tears had quit flowing. Then he said, “Do ve thtart building another boat, Tham?”

Sam Clemens rose to his feet. The gangplank was being drawn up by the electromechanical machinery of his fabulous Riverboat. Whistles were shrilling exultantly, and bells were clanging. John would still be laughing. He might even be watching Sam through a telescope.

Sam shook his fist, hoping that John was watching him.

“I’ll get you yet, traitor John!” he howled. “I’ll build
another boat, and I’ll catch up with you! I don’t care what obstacles I encounter or who gets in my way! I’ll run you down, John, and I’ll blast your stolen boat out of The River with my new boat! And nobody, absolutely nobody, the Stranger, the Devil, God, nobody, no matter what his powers, is going to stop me!

“Some day, John! Some day!”
Volume III of the Riverworld series will take Sam Clemens all the way up The River with Richard Francis Burton and the rest of The Twelve to the Misty Tower and the secret of the Ethicals.

Technological note: Potassium nitrate is prepared on the Riverworld by feeding a certain type of earthworm human excrement. The end product of this diet is crystallized potassium nitrate, which, mixed with charcoal and sulfur, makes black gunpowder.