**The Long Sleep**

Roger Zelazny

“Tell me about Pan Rudo,” Hannah said.

“Now “ ‘I’m talking early fifties,” Croyd answered. “That may be too far back for whatever you’re after.” She shook her head.

“I want to hear about it,” she told him.

He clapped his hands together abruptly, squashing a darting moth.

“Okay,” he said. “I was around twenty years old at the time. But I’d been infected with the wild card virus when I was going on fourteen—so I’d had plenty of experience with it. Too much, it seemed. It still depressed me a lot in those days. I got to thinking about it, and I decided that since I couldn’t change the condition maybe I could change my attitude toward it somehow, come to better terms with it. I read a lot of pop psychology books—about making friends with yourself and getting well-adjusted and all that—but they didn’t do me any good. So one morning I saw a piece about this guy in the Times. He was chairing a local conference. Kind of interesting. Neuropsychiatrist. He’d actually known Freud, studied with him for a while. Then he was at the Jungian Institute in Switzerland for a time. Got back to physiology then. He was involved with a group doing dauerschlaf research while he was in Zurich. Ever hear of it?”

“Can’t say that “ ‘I have,” she said.

He took a swallow of beer, moving his left foot to crush a pawing beetle.

“The theory behind dauerschlaf is that the body and the mind heal themselves better and faster while a person’s asleep than when he’s awake,” he said. “They were experimenting with the treatment of drug withdrawal, psychological disorders, TB, and other stuff by putting people to sleep for long periods of time, using hypnosis and drugs. They’d induce artificial comas to promote healing. He wasn’t into that much when “I met him, but I’d learned of it earlier, because of my condition—and the connection intrigued me. I checked him out in the phone book, called, got his secretary, made an appointment. He had a cancellation for later that week, and she gave me that one.”

Croyd took a quick swallow.

“It was a rainy Thursday afternoon in March of 1951 then, that I first met Pan Rudo-—”

“Do you recall the date as well?” Hannah asked.

“Afraid not.”

“How is it that you recall the year, the month, and the day so readily?”

“I count days after I wake up,” he replied, “to keep track of how far along I am in my waking cycle. It gives me an idea of how much rationality I have left, so I can make plans for things I want to get done. When the days dwindle down to a precious few I avoid my friends and try to get off somewhere by myself so nobody gets hurt. Now, I woke up on Sunday, I came across the article two days later, I got the appointment for two days after that. That makes it a Thursday. And I tend to remember months when things happen, because my picture of a year is kind of a jagged thing based on seasons. This was spring and rainy—March.”

He took a drink of beer. He swatted another moth. Damn bugs!” he muttered. “Can’t stand bugs.”

“And the year?” she said. “How can you be sure it was 1951?”

Because it was in the fall of the following year, 1952, that they tested the hydrogen bomb in the Pacific.”

“Oh,” she said, brow furrowing slightly. “Sure. Go ahead.”

“So “I went to see him the year before the hydrogen bomb got tested,” he continued. “They were working on it then, you know. They’d decided to go ahead on it back In ’48.”

“Yes, I know,” she said.

“A mathematician named Stan Ulam cracked the equations for Teller. Speaking of mathematicians, did you know that Tom Lehrer was a Manhattan Project mathematician? He wrote some great songs—”

“What happened when you got to Dr. Rudo’s office?”

“Right,” he responded. “Like I said, it was raining, and this trench coat I had on was dripping wet when I came into his reception area, and there was a pretty oriental rug on the floor. Looked as if it had silk in it, even. The receptionist hurried around her desk to help me, saying she’d hang it in their rest room rather than have it on a brass coat tree near the door which looked as if it held her own coat as well as the doctor’s.

“I reached out and caught hold of all the water on the coat and the rug with my mind, and I removed it. I wasn’t sure what to do with it then, so I held it in between places. You know what I’m talking about? You hear about Aces and Jokers who can teleport things—I’ve had the power a number of times myself—making things disappear in one place and reappear in another without seeming to pass through intervening space. But did you ever wonder where something is when it’s in between places? I think about things like that a lot. Now, I wasn’t sure of my range yet—though it seemed I could send smaller objects farther off than larger ones—and I wasn’t sure how much water I’d just picked up, so I couldn’t say for certain that I could send it all outside his sixth-floor window and let it fall down onto Park. I had been experimenting this time, though, with hiding things in between places—at first just to see whether it could be done—and I learned that it could. I’d learned that I could make things disappear in one place and not appear in another for a while—though I felt a kind of pressure in my mind and body while I was doing it. So I just held my water and smiled.

“ ‘No need,’ I told her. ’See? It’s okay.’ ”

“She stared at the thing as if it were alive, even running a hand over it, to make sure. Then she hung it on the tree.”

“ ‘Won’t you have a seat for a moment, Mr. Crenson?’ she said. ’I’ll let Dr. Rudo know you’re here.’ ”

“She moved toward the intercom on her desk, and I was about to ask her where that rest room was—so I could get rid of my water—when an inner door opened and Dr. Rudo came into the reception area. He was a six-footer, blond and blue-eyed, who put on a professional smile and extended his hand as he came up to me.

“ ‘Mr. Crenson,’ ” he said. “ ‘It is good to meet you. I am Pan Rudo. Won’t you come into my office?’ ” His voice was rich and resonant, his teeth very white.

“ ‘Thanks,’ ” I said.

“He held the door for me and I entered the next room. It was brighter than I’d thought it might be, with a few pastoral watercolors bearing his signature and architectural etchings signed by others on the walls, another oriental rug on the floor, lots of reds and blues in it. A large aquarium occupied a table to the left of the door, bright fish darting and drifting within it, a chain of bubbles along a rear corner.

“ ‘Have a seat,’ he told me, his speech slightly noted—German, and maybe something else—and he steered me toward a big, comfortable-looking leather chair facing his desk.

“I took the chair. He moved around the desk and seated himself. He smiled again, picking up a pencil and rolling it between his hands.”

“ ‘Everybody who comes here has problems,’ he began, maintaining eye-contact.

“I nodded.

“ ‘I’m no exception, I guess,’ I told him. ’It’s hard to know how to begin, though.’

“ ‘There are certain broad categories most people’s probblems fall into,’ he said. ’Family, the people you work with....’

“ ‘No problems there,’ I said. The pressure of holding the water was bothering me, and I looked around for a suitable container into which I might deposit it. A metal wastebasket would have been fine, but I couldn’t see one anywhere about.

“ ‘Money? Sex?’ he suggested.

“ ‘No, I’ve got plenty of money, and I get laid pretty regular,’ I said, wondering whether I could move it beyond his window and let it go. Only, it was even farther away than the one in the reception area.

“I shifted in the chair and checked out the other side of the room.

“ ‘Mr. Crenson, is something bothering you—I mean something physical—right now?’ he asked.

“ ‘Yeah, I admitted, ’I’m having trouble holding my water.’

“ ‘There is a rest room outside,’ he said, beginning to rise. ’I’ll show you—’

“ ‘Not that way. I mean, like this water is sort of—in my head, I guess.’

“He froze. He stared at me.

“ ‘I’m afraid I don’t understand exactly what you mean,’ he said then. Water—in your head?’

“I grinned.

“ ‘Well, yes and no; I said. ’I was speaking sort of--figuratively. I mean, there’s this water from my coat and I’m holding it with my mind and it’s getting to be sort of a strain. So I should put it somewhere. Maybe I will just take it to that rest room and dump it there, if you’ll show me—’

“ ‘Mr. Crenson, do you know what a defense mechanism is?’ he asked.

“ ‘Sure, I’ve been doing my homework. It’s something you do or say or think to keep from doing or saying or thinking something else you really want to but for some reason are afraid to. Oh, you think that’s what this is. No, it’s real water, and I’m carrying it and can make it be anywhere I want it to be inside of about a ten-foot radius from where I am right now—I think.’

“He smiled.

“ ‘Then why don’t you deposit it in the fish tank?’ he said. ’And we can get on with our conversation.’

“ ‘That’s not a bad idea,’ I said.—It’s pretty full, though.’

“ ‘That’s all right,’ he said.

“So I moved the water into the tank. Immediately, the thing overflowed. Dr. Rudo’s eyes widened as he watched the water run down the sides and spill onto the floor.

Then he gave me a strange look and reached out and worked his intercom.

“ ‘Mrs. Weiler, would you come in here a moment?’ he said. ’And bring a mop and a pail? We’ve had a small accident. Thank you.’

“Then he lowered himself back into his chair and studied me for several seconds.

Perhaps you should begin by telling me how you did what you just did,’ he said.

“ ‘It’s kind of long and involved,’ I said. ’On the other kind. It’s also the cause of the problem I came to see about.’

“Take your time,’ he told me.

“ ‘It was back in September of ’46,’ I began, ’the day Jetboy died. .’

“Mrs. Weiler came in a couple of minutes later and was about to mop the wet area. I beat her to it and transported it all from the floor into the bucket. She stepped back and stared after the splash occurred.

“ ‘Just take it away,’ Dr. Rudo told her. ’Then phone everyone who has an appointment this afternoon. Cancel all of them.

“ ‘Go ahead, Mr. Crenson, the whole story, please,’ he said then, after she’d left.

“So I told him what it was like, and the thing that made my case different from all the others—how I fear sdeeping more than anything else, and the things I do to postpone it. He questioned me at great length about the sdeeping; and that was the first time I can remember hearing the word dauerschlaf. He seemed taken by my ease and its parallels to an experimental European therapy technique he’d apparently once had something to do with. Also, as it turned out, he had heard of my case; and from the way he quoted medical journals, it seemed he’d read every important paper published on the wild card virus.

“I talked all afternoon. I told him about my family and old Bentley and the second-story work I used to do. I told him about my transformations, about my friends, about some of the scrapes I’d been involvcd in. I found myself starting to like the guy. I’d never really talked that way to anybody before. He seemed fascinated by the jokers and aces, by the different manifestations of the wild card virus I’d seen. Got me to talking about them at some length, shaking his head at my descriptions of some of the worst joker cases I’ve known. Even got into a long philosophical discussion with me as to what I thought it might be doing to the whole human race. told him that not too many nats dated jokers, if it was the genetic angle he was thinking about, but he just kepH shaking his head and said that wasn’t the point, that their existing at all was like a cancer on human life in general, that you had to think of it sociologically as well as biologically. I allowed as he could have a point, but that it seemed one of those ’So what?’ points. The situation was already in place, and the real questions involved what you were going to do about it. He agreed with me then, saying that he hoped it would be soon.

“Most of all, he seemed fascinated by my long sleeps—my dauerschlafen—and the way they pulled me apart and put me back together again. He questioned me about them at great length—how I felt going into them, coming out of them, whether I remembered anything that happened during them, whether I had any dreams while they were in progress. Then he told me about dauerschlaf as a form of therapy, of how his earlier work in Europe had involved the production of prolonged comas in non-wild card patients, by means of drugs and hypnosis, to capitalize on the remarkable recuperative abilities of the body and mind during sleep. He’d apparently gotten some very positive results with this, which was one of the reasons he found my case intriguing. The parallel struck him so forcibly, he said, that he would want to pursue the matter for that reason alone, even if he couldn’t do more than adjust my feelings otherwise. But he felt that it could also be the means for doing even more for me.”

Croyd finished his beer, fetched a second bottle and opened it.

“Mr. Crenson,” Hannah Davis stated, and he met her eyes, “your tail seems to have developed wandering hands.”

“Sony,” he said. “Sometimes it has a mind of its own.” The tiger-striped appendage emerged from beneath the table to lash behind him. Croyd took a drink.

“So the man represented himself as being able to cure wild card condition?” she said.

“No,” Croyd replied. “He never said that he could cure it. What he proposed later was something differ-different-a rather ingenious-sounding way of stabilizing it in a fashion that I’d no longer need to fear going to sleep.”

“Of course he was a fraud,” she said. “He took your money and he got your hopes up and then he couldn’t deliver. Right?”

“Wrong, Croyd said. “He knew what he was talking about, and he was able to deliver. That wasn’t the problem.”

“Wait a minute,” she said. “It would have made world headlines if someone had found a way to mitigate wild card effects. Tachyon would’ve picked up on it and been distributing it on street corners. If it worked, how come no one ever heard about it?”

Croyd raised his hand, and his tail.

“Bear with me. If it were simpler, I’d be done talking,” he said. “Excuse me.”

He was gone. A man-sized form flashed past the bar at the corner of her seeing. She heard a door open and close. When she looked toward the sound, there was no one in sight. A moment later, however, a shadow flashed by and Croyd was seated before her again, sipping his beer.

“Rapid metabolism,” he explained.

“Pan Rudo,” he continued then, as if there had been no interruption, “seemed quite taken with my story. I talked all afternoon, and he took pages and pages of notes. Every now and then he’d ask me a question. Later, Mrs. Weiler knocked on the door and told him it was quitting time and asked whether he wanted her to lock the office door when she left. He said no, he’d do it in a few minutes. Then he offered to take me to dinner and I took him up on it.

“We went out then and had a few steaks—he was surprised at my metabolism, too—and we continued to talk through dinner. Afterwards, we went to his apartment—a very nice pad—and talked some more, until fairly late. He’d learned my story by then, and a lot of other things I don’t usually talk about, too.”

“What do you mean?” she asked.

“Well,” Croyd said, “then, and in the days that followed, he told me about some of the more popular psychological theories. He’d even known the people who’d developed them. He’d studied with Freud for a while, and later at the Jungian Institute in Switzerland at the same time he was doing dauerschlaf research there. He told me about Freud’s ideas on infantile sexuality, stages of development, sublimation, about ids and egos and superegos. And about Adler’s drive to power and Rank’s birth trauma. He talked about Jung’s personality types and his theory of individuation. He said he felt that they all had something to them, some more for some people than others, or at different times in a person’s life. He said that he was more interested in the final forms that these things took, in the emotional constructions they led to for a person’s dealing with life. He felt that life is a compromise between what you want and what you get, and that there’s always fear involved in the transaction—and it doesn’t matter which of all the classical sources it springs from, it’s just something that’s always there. He said that we tell ourselves lies in order to deal with it—lies about the world, lies about ourselves. He had this idea, actually, from the playwright Ibsen, who called the big one—the big phony construct about yourself and the world--a ’life lie.’ Rudo felt that everybody has one of these, and that it was just a matter of the degree of its falseness that made the difference between psychosis and neurosis. He told me that his whole approach to problems

that weren’t organic involved finding out a person’s life I manipulating it so the patient can come to better with reality. Not to get rid of it. He said that some life lie is necessary. Break it or tamper too deeply or damage the personality, maybe drive the person completely nuts. He looked on therapy as a means of economizing the lie for better accommodation to the world.”

Croyd paused for a drink.

“It sounds very manipulative,” Hannah said, “and it seems as if it puts the therapist in a kind of godlike it ion. You help this guy find the key to your personality-then he goes in, looks around, and decides what throw away, what to keep, what to remodel.”

“Yeah, I guess it does, Croyd said, “when you put it that way.”

“Granting that this approach is effective, it looks as if even a well-meaning adjustment might sometimes cause some damage—not even considering the possibility of willful abuse. Is that what he did to you? Mess with your self-image and your world-view?”

“Not exactly,” Croyd said. “Not intentionally or directly. He explained that he did want to explore my life lie because he had to know my fears, because they would relate directly to what he had in mind for stabilizing my condition at a level I’d find emotionally satisfying.”

“You did pick up the jargon, didn’t you?”

“Well, I was reading a lot in the area the whole time he was working with me. I guess everyone does that.” He took another drink of beer.

“Are you stalling now?” she said. “Because you don’t want to talk about those fears? If they’re not essential to the story you can leave them out, you know.”

“I guess I am,” he acknowledged. “But I’d probably better mention them, for the sake of completeness. I don’t know how much you know about me....”

“Mark Meadows told me a few things about you. But there were a lot of gaps. You sleep a lot. You lie low lot—”

He shook his head.

“Not that kind of stuff,” he said. “See, I’d thought of seeing a shrink for some time before I actually did. “I guess I read a lot more in the area than I really let on–not just self-help books--some fairly heavy-duty stuff. There were two reasons for this. One is that I know what it feels like to be nuts—really out of your mind. I do it to myself regularly with amphetamines, because I’m afraid to go to sleep. And I usually wind up pushing it too far, and I can remember some of the crazy things and some of the terrible things I did when my thinking

and my feelings were all screwed up. So I know what psychosis feels like, and I fear that almost as much as do sleeping.”

He laughed.

“ ‘Almost,’ ” he said. “Because they’re really tied up together. Rudo showed me that, and I guess I owe him for the insight, if nothing else.”

“I don’t understand,” she said, after he’d risen and stood staring out at a sudden rainfall for at least half a minute.

“My mother went crazy,” he said then, “after the wild card business. Most likely, I was a big part of it. I don’t know. Maybe it would have happened anyway. Maybe there was a schizoid gene involved. I loved her, and I saw her change. She spent her last years in asylums, died in one. I thought about it a lot in those days, wondering whether I might wind up that way, too. I was afraid of that kind of change. Then every time I took drugs to postpone sleeping I did go bonkers. I’m sure I know what she felt like, some of the things she went through....”

“Wouldn’t it have been better just to sleep then?” Hannah asked. “After all, it was going to happen anyway.”

Croyd turned and he was smiling. “The same thing Rudo asked me,” he said, and backed slowly back to the table. I didn’t know the answer then,” he continued, “but I came to find it. It’s a part of my life lie.” He seated himself and folded his hands before him. “The way I came to see it, sleep for me represents a big unknown change. In a way, it’s like death, and all of my death-fears are attached to it. But there’s more to it than that. Rudo made me look into it deeply and I saw that my fear of insanity is also there. I always know I’ll be changed, and at some primitive level of my mind I fear that I’ll wake up psychotic, like her, and it’ll never go away. I saw her change too much.”

He laughed then.

“Ironic,” he said, “the way we make these stories we’re always telling ourselves work. In a way, I drive myself regularly to keep from going crazy. That’s one of

the places of irrationality. Everybody’s got them.”

I’d think that once a therapist discovered that his first order of business would be to try to get rid of it.”

Croyd nodded.

“Rudo told me that that’s what most of them would try to do. But he wasn’t at all certain but that it might be serving just that function—keeping me sane in the long run.”

She shook her head.

“You’ve lost me,” she said.

“Understandable. This part doesn’t apply to nats. It has only to do with manifestations of the wild card virus. Rudo, as I said, had read all of the literature on the virus. He’d been impressed by certain conjectures based on anecdotal evidence, since there was no way of running controlled studies on them, due to the effect that there is a psychosomatic component to the virus’s manifestation.

Like, there was once a kid--we called him Kid Dinosaur—who’d loved dinosaur books. He came up with the ability to turn himself into kid-sized replicas of different dinosaurs. And there’s Hits Mack, a panhandler I know who can go up to any vending machine, hit it once and have it deliver him anything he wants from its display. That’s all. It’s the simplest wild card ability I know. Takes care of his meals and allows him to devote a hundred percent of his panhandling income to booze. He once told me that something like that had been a daydream of his for years. Lives on Twinkies and Fritos and stale chocolate bars. Happy man.

“Anyway,” he went on, “Rudo felt that the anecdotal evidence was persuasive, and that there was a way to test it now. Me. He proposed inducing dauerschlaf in me by means of drugs and hypnosis that worked with the fears behind my life lie and caused me to change in an agreed-upon fashion. If it worked it would show that there was a psychosomatic component. It wouldn’t be of help to any joker or ace in the world but me, though, and it could only be used to help me because of the periodic nature of my condition.

“So we set out to prove it, if we could. If the results were positive, he’d explained, then I could decide on the sort of body I wanted to live in for the rest of my life and whatever power I wanted to accompany it, and he’d induce it. He’d do it again for several times after that, to reinforce it, along with suggestions that it would always turn out that way, and I’d be set as a well-adjusted ace.

Croyd finished his beer, went back for another, stamping out a line of passing ants along the way.

Is that where he crossed you up?” she asked.

“Nope, we tried it and it worked,” he said. “He was right. So were the other people who’d made guesses along these lines. I told him I wanted to come out looking like Humphrey Bogart in Casablanca—I’d always liked that movie—and when I woke up I was a dead ringer for Bogie.”

“Really? And what about a wild card ability? Was he able to do something with that, also?”

Croyd smiled.

“Yes,” he said. “It was just a small ability, but for some reason it stuck. Maybe because it was so small it didn’t take up much space wherever these things are managed. Followed me through any number of changes. Haven’t used it in years, though. Wait a minute.”

He raised his beer can, took a slow drink, stared off into the distance.

“Play it, Sam,” he said in a strangely altered voice. Then, “Play it!”

The tape recorder clicked to a halt. Then the Play button was depressed. The sounds of a piano playing “As Time Goes By” emerged from the small speaker.

She stared for several moments at the machine, then reached over and turned it off. Immediately, she set it on Record again.

“How— How do you manage it if there’s no tape recorder around?”

“Almost anything that can be induced to vibrate in the audible range will do,” he said. I don’t know how. Maybe it’s even a smaller ability than Hits Mack’s.”

“So you woke up looking like Rick, and you could provide your own soundtrack whenever you wanted.”

“Yes.”

“What happened next?”

“He gave me a couple of weeks to enjoy it. Wanted to observe me and be sure there were no undesirable side-effects. I went out and got stopped on the streets and approached in restaurants for autographs. Rudo wrote up his notes. He did send me to some friends for a full physical at that time, too. I still had an abnormally high metabolism and my usual insomnia.”

“I wonder whether those notes still exist, somewhere?” she said.

Croyd shrugged.

“Don’t know,” he said. “Wouldn’t matter anyway. I wouldn’t want anyone to mess with the process that way again.”

“What happened?”

“We saw each other regularly during the next couple of weeks. I went over ideas of what I wanted to look like and what I wanted to be able to do. I didn’t want to stay the way I was. It was fun the first few days, but after a while it wears kind of thin, looking like someone famous. I wanted to be sort of average in height and build, sandy-haired, not bad-looking but not real handsome. And I decided on a kind of telepathic persuasive ability I once had. You get in less trouble if you can talk your way out of things. And it could come in handy if I ever wanted to be a salesman. Rudo in the meantime said that he was studying medical literature, looking for anything else that might be useful in my case, to help nail down the change good and tight, to make it permanent. Once, when we were having lunch together, I remember him saying, ’Croyd, for all of that you know you’ll still be a caricature of humanity. I just wish it were within my power to wipe out everything that demon bug did to you—wipe out all of the others, too, for that matter—and leave the human race as clean as it was before.’

“ ‘I appreciate everything you’re doing, Doc,’ I said. ’Seems like you’ve been devoting almost every waking minute to my case these past few weeks.’

“ ‘I think it’s the most important case I’ve ever had,’ he replied.

“ ‘Any new developments on the technical end of things?’

“ ‘Yes, I think there might be a way to reinforce the change by using certain levels of radiation on your nervous system,’ he said.

“ ‘Radiation? I thought we were going the purely psychological route through dauerschlaf.’

“ ‘This is some very new stuff,’ he said. ’I’m still looking into it.’

“ ‘You’re the doctor,’ I said. ’Keep me posted.’

“He picked up the tab again. Like always. And he wasn’t even charging me for his therapy. Said he looked at it as a service to humanity. Gee, I liked the man.” Mr. Crenson,” she said. “The tail.”

“Call me Croyd,” he said.

“ ‘Croyd, I mean it. I don’t care if it is a unique experience. This is business.’

“Sorry,” he said, tail flicking out behind him. “What are you doing tonight? This is a kind of dull place and—” I want to hear the rest of the story, Croyd. All this psychological talk’s got me thinking maybe this is your way of avoiding it.”

“Maybe you’re right,” he said. I hadn’t thought of that, but you may have a point. Sure. Okay. On with it.

“The days passed and I was really feeling good. I knew I wouldn’t be dropping any speed this time around because I wasn’t afraid to sleep. I’d seen my life lie with sleep, madness, and death all twisted together—and I saw that I could face it, that the problem would be gone once the condition was stabilized. And Rudo was going to fix that good, once he’d worked out how this radiation therapy would apply, on top of the dauershlaf.

“One day he asked me to lunch and we took a walk in Central Park afterwards. As we were strolling, with him looking at the landscape as if he wished he were settled somewhere painting it, he said to me, ’Croyd, how much longer have you got?’

“ ‘What do you mean?’ I asked.

“ ‘It’s time for you to sleep again,’ he said.

“ ‘It’s hard to tell for sure till I start getting the feeling,’ I said. ’But based on past experience I’ve got at least a week.’

“ ‘I wonder about inducing it beforehand,’ he mused, ’to swing it.’

“ ‘Swing what?’ I asked.

“ ‘First, let me ask you another question,’ he said. ’You told me that you’d studied with an old second-story man named Bentley, and that you were engaged in that sort of busincss yourself.’

“ ‘That’s right.’

“ ‘Just how good are you at that sort of thing?’

“ ‘Not bad,’ I said.

“ ‘You still know how to go about it?’

“ ‘I’m not out of practice, if that’s what you mean.’

“ ‘What if it were a place particularly security-conscious, well-guarded?’

“I shrugged.

“ ‘Couldn’t really tell you till I cased it,’ I said. ’Sometimes, you know, I’d come up with a wild card talent that really helped in these things.’

“Now, that’s a thought. . .

“What’s the angle, Doc? What’re you leading up to?’

“ ‘I’ve worked out what you need, Croyd, for the radiation part of the therapy. Unfortunately, the necessary materials are not available to civilians.’

“ ‘Who’s got them?’

“ ‘Los Alamos Laboratories.’

“ ‘If they’re medically useful you’d think they’d let some of the stuff loose, for humanitarian—’

“ ‘They wouldn’t be useful for anyone but yourself. I had to adjust all of the equations to take your wild metabolism into account.’

“ ‘I see,’ I said. ’And you’re wondering whether I might be able to pry some of the stuff loose? Helping myself to help myself, so to speak?’

“ ‘In a word, yes.’

“ ‘That might be managed,’ I said. ’How soon could I get a look at the premises?’

“ ‘There’s the rub,’ he said. I don’t know how it can be done.’

“ ‘What do you mean?’

“ ‘The whole city is closed. There are checkpoints. If you’re not authorized personnel you can’t get by. It’s a government installation. Top secret atomic research.’

“ ‘Oh. You mean it’s not just the Lab, but the whole damn city’s off-limits?’

“ ‘That’s right.’

“ ‘This sounds a little trickier than breaking into an apartment or a store and cracking a safe, Doc. Are you sure we can’t get this stuff someplace else?’

“ ‘Positive.’

“ ‘Shit!’ I said. ’I don’t know. . .’

“ ‘There are two possibilities, Croyd,’ he said. ’You just reminded me of one of them. Now, neither one might be sufficient in itself to get the job done, but together--Together they might be sufficient.’

“ ‘Better let me in on it.’

“ ‘I’ve an—associate,’ he said, ’who might be able to help. He has connections at the Lab, I’m pretty certain.

“ ‘But he would have to be very circumspect.’

“ ‘What does that mean?’

“ ‘He could get you into the city without arousing suspicion. He could probably get you a look at the outside of the place—perhaps even a map of the inside.’

“ ‘Sounds like a good start,’ I said.

“ ‘I’m going to be speaking with him as soon as I can reach him, and I’ll find out more about the setup there. In the meantime, I’d like for you to be thinking of something. If we were to induce another change before we get there, what wild card talent might serve you best for the initial scouting? Bear in mind that we should be able to run another change after that, to provide you with whatever would then feel most suitable for the job itself.’

“ ‘All right,’ I said. ’You’ll call me then?’

“I had some unrelated business to take care of at the time, so I went off and spent a couple of days settling it. Then one evening I got a call from Rudo asking me whether I could come over to his place. I told him yes, and caught a cab.

“ ‘Croyd; he said, I have learned things about this atomic city in New Mexico. You must have a pass with a photo on it to gain entrance. Such visitors’ passes can be obtained in Santa Fe if you know someone in Los Alamos who notifies them that you are coming to see him, and then meets you at the Los Alamos gate.’

“ ‘We know such a person?’ I asked.

“ ‘Yes, we have a man on their security staff who’ll take care of it,’ he said. “"’That is, my friend has a friend who will manage things in this regard. It used to be under military security, but now the Atomic Energy Commission is providing the guards—and, as fortune would have it, there is a man in such a position who will be glad to do me this favor. This will get us into the town, and we will be staying at Fuller Lodge, which is where visitors are put up.’

“ ‘That does make it sound a little easier,’ I said. Will your friend be able to get us to the place where I’ll have to do the job?’

“ ‘I got the impression that he could point it out to you, but that actually getting you inside would be too risky for him.’

“I nodded.

“ ‘I guess that’s where the right wild card power will come in handy.’

“ ‘I wonder,’ he said. ’Getting in may not be the biggest problem. Getting out of town with it might be.’

“ ‘You said we could do the dauerschlaf business twice on this job?’ I asked him.

“ ‘Why not?’ he said. What have you in mind?’

“ ‘I’ come out looking bland,’ I said, ’and equipped with a power that can get me a closer look at the premises. We visit the city and I case the place. Then I decide what’s needed for the job and you induce it. I do the business, we take the goods to some nice, safe spot, and you give me the final treatment—radiation and all—and I can spend the rest of my life in a relatively normal fashion. And if there’s ever anything you need, I’ll take care of it for you.’

“ ‘He smiled.’’

“ ‘Your stabilization will be reward enough,’ he said, moving to the bar and fetching us Cognacs in balloon snifters. “ ‘I think this is going to prove an educational experience for both of us.’

“ ‘I’ll drink to that,’ I said, taking a big sniff.

“We touched glasses lightly.

“ ‘Confusion to our enemies,’ he said.

“We worked out my physical appearance for the job, and I detailed the power I thought I’d need. Then Rudo set about inducing the dauerschlaf which would provide it. We decided to travel across county by train to Lamy, New Mexico,¬ where the travel agent would arrange for us to be met id thc station by a pickup truck for the luggage. This was I because I was to be a part of the luggage. It was decided I that it would expedite matters for me to continue my dauerschlaf in a well-padded packing case. The agent also made us reservations at a place called La Fonda, in Santa Fe.

“And so I have no memories to speak of concerning the train trip. I went to sleep in Rudo’s apartment and woke up in a packing case in a hotel room in Santa Fe. It’s no fun being luggage. I woke in a pretzeled condition, with a little light leaking in around the upper edges of my confinement. “The lid was still nailed tightly in place as we’d agreed, to prevent any curious hotel maid from thinking the good doctor’d included a corpse as part of his travel gear. I listened for a while—a thing we’d also agreed upon but heard no voices. Then I rapped on the nearest side of the case, to get his attention if he were present. There was no response. Since I could detect no motion, chances were I wasn’t in transit. And the light seemed an indication I was no longer in a boxcar. So I assumed I was either on a railroad platform, in the hotel lobby awaiting transport to a room, or in the room itself with Rudo having gone out somewhere. It seemed too quiet for a platform or a lobby, though. So . . .

“Twisting myself into a more congenial position, I extended my arms upward, felt the lid, and began to push. There followed a squealing of nails as it rose, and more light came to me. The lid came free on my right, then above my feet and head, finally falling aside to the left, nails bending, the wood making small splintering sounds.

“One deep breath then, and I rose to my feet, still unsteady. I was nude, since shape changing tends to ruin garments. But my suitcase held a variety of clothing, purchased with my target physique in mind; and even as I rose I saw that piece of luggage, across the room on a rack.

“I stepped out of the case and made my way into bathroom, where I showered. The mirror showed me a dark haired, dark-eyed man as I shaved; about five-foot-eight, and of medium build. I finished putting myself in order and went hack into the room, where I opened my suitcase and hunted out suitable garments.

“After I’d dressed I departed the mom and found my way downstairs and into a Spanish-style lobby. From there, I saw a bar with tables at which people were eating. Which was what I was looking for—food. I was, as always on awakening, ravenous. But I stepped outside for a few moments first. There was a lot of adobe around me and what looked like a small park off to my left. There was a cathedral off to the right. I could investigate them later. The sun, which I’d come out to check, stood a little past midheaven. Since I didn’t know which way was east or west, it could be a little before noon or a little after. Either way, lunchtime, with half a day ahead of me.

“I went back inside and made my way into the bar. I found myself a table and read the menu. A number of items, such as enchiladas, were unfamiliar to me. So I just decided to order everything on the menu and work my way through. I’d also stopped at a newsstand I’d noticed off the lobby and picked up copies of all the papers they had, as is my wont upon awakening, to find out what had happened in the world while I slept.

“I had a succession of interesting things wrapped in tortillas, to the accompaniment of refried beans and rice, and was sitting there reading and waiting for the desserts to start arriving when Rudo came in, clad in a white suit and natty sportshirt, camera over his shoulder. I was puzzled not at all as he strode on by me to order a Gin Fizz at the bar. You get used to being ignored by friends and acquaintances when you change your appearance every time you sleep.

I caught his attention when he turned to sweep the room with his gaze. I raised my hand and nodded.

“ ‘Ah! The eminent Dr. Rudo,’ I said, faking a slight German accent. His eyes widened, then narrowed. He rose from his immediately and approached me, brow furrowed, drink still in his hand.

“ ‘I don’t believe I recall ...’ he began.

“I rose and extended my hand.

“ ‘Meyerhoff,’ I said, since I sometimes like to put people on. ’Carl Meyerhoff. We met before the war. Was it Vienna or Zurich? You were doing work with that long sleep business. Fascinating stuff. You had your little problems, I recall. I trust everything is going satisfactorily for you these days?’

“Quickly, he looked over both shoulders as I seated myself again. How long could I keep this going? I wondered. Several minutes would be great. So long as he didn’t switch to another language. . . .

“He drew out the chair across from me and seated himself quickly.

“ ‘Meyerhoff he said then. ’I am trying to remember. . . You are a medical man?’

“ ‘Surgeon,’ I replied, figuring that was far enough away from psychiatry that he wouldn’t trip me up with some comment involving his specialty. ’I got out when

things got bad,’ I added cryptically.

“He nodded.

“ ‘I was fortunate in that respect, also,’ he said. ’So, you are practicing here in the southwest?’

“ ‘California,’ I said. ’I’m returning from a medical conference now. Just stopped here to do a little sightseeing Yourself?’

“ ‘I am practicing in New York,’ he said. ’This is a holiday for me, also. Striking landscapes here for painting, and the light is so pure. We met at a conference or some hospital perhaps?’

“I nodded.

“ ‘I heard you speak once on this dauerschlaf therapy I believe there was a small party that evening. We spoke for a time of some of the troubles. . ..’ I let it trail off, open to interpretation as to troubles with the therapy, with friends, associates, family, European politics: His reactions had me curious now, and I wanted to see what he’d say. And if he got very evasive that would be interesting, too.

“He sighed.

“ ‘They looked at things differently in those days,’ he said, ’where I came from. And the early work, of course, had to be experimental.’

“ ‘Of course,’ I said.

“ ‘When did you leave?’

“ ‘1944; I replied. ’Spent some time in Argentina. Came here later under the Project Paper Clip dispensation.’

“He raised his drink and took a swallow.

“ ‘Yes, I’ve heard of it,’ he said. ’Governments can be gracious—when they want something.’

“He laughed. I joined him.

“ ‘Fortunately, there was no need for me to employ such a route,’ he went on. “ ‘Some of the past died with the bombings and the records they destroyed, as I understand it.’

“He took another drink.

“ ‘You are staying here at the hotel?’ he asked. ” ’Yes.’

“ ‘We should have dinner together. Would you care to meet in the lobby--say, seven o’clock?’

“ ‘That would be pleasant,’ I replied.

“He began to rise, just as the waitress arrived with four desserts and my check. I picked up the check and glanced at it.

“ ‘May I sign for this?’ I asked her.

“ ‘Sure’ she answered. ’Be sure to put down your room number.’

“ ‘That would be 208,’ I said, accepting the pen she offered me.

“Rudo froze, looking back, studying my face. ’Croyd’ he said.

“I smiled.

“His face went through an amazing variety of changes, finally settling into a scowl. Then he seated himself and forward.

“ ‘That—was—not—funny,’ he told me. I—do—not-aprrreciate—such—monkeyshining.’

“ ‘When you get a chance like this every time you wake up, you might as well play it for a few laughs,’ I said.

“ ‘I am not amused.’

“ ‘Sory,’ I said, as I attacked the flan. ’Just wanted to brighten our day.’

“He succeeded in convincing me that he had no sense of humor. But after a few minutes he was mollified, watching me eat desserts.

“ ‘I have located the office where we must obtain visitors passes,’ he finally said, ’for our trip to Los Alamos. It is nearby. Our names should be on the list of expected visitors. Photographs will be required. We should stop by this afternoon and take care of that.’

“ ‘Yes,’ I said. ’How’d they get on the list?’

“ ‘Our man in Los Alamos sent down word that we were coming to visit him.’

“ ‘Handy,’ I said. ’How long have we been in town?’

“ ‘Here? This is our fifth day. I included instructions when I induced the dauerschlaf that you sleep for as short a time as possible. You were out for several days in my apartment and several more in transit.’

“I nodded as I gestured at the stack of newspapers.

” I’d noticed the date,’ I said. ’How far is it to Los Alamos?’

“ ‘It is about thirty-five or forty miles north of here,’ he replied, ’in the mountains. I’ve obtained a car.’

“We strolled outside after lunch, and he steered me to the left. The area that had struck me as parklike proved to be the Plaza. We passed around it in a clockwise fashion, stopping to study the work displayed on blankets by Indian craftsmen under the portal of the Palace of the Governors. Lots of silver and turquoise and some pretty pots. I bought a bola Rudo didn’t like and wore it.

“He led me then to a one-story building nearby, where we entered through a small doorway. We came into a little suite of rooms where a woman sat at a desk.

“ ‘Hello,’ he said. I am Ivan Karamazov and this is Croyd Crenson. We were told to come here to pick up our visitors’ passes for Los Alamos.’

“ ‘Let me check the list,’ she said, and she opened a drawer and withdrew a clipboard holding a stack of papers. She hummed as she checked through these. Then, ’Yes; she said, ’I have you here.’

“She passed us some forms to fill out and told us we’d need to have our pictures taken after that. She told us the passes would be ready later in the day, or we could pick them up in the morning, since we’d said we’d be driving up the next day. We thanked her and departed.

“We walked around for a couple of hours after that, then went for a drive. Rugged, bright country. Lots of little pine trees. Big mountains. Small town. Quiet. I kind of liked the place. Wouldn’t have minded spending a few weeks there.

“When it got dark we returned to the hotel and ate a big, leisurely meal, with several bottles of wine. In the dining room this time. We went back to the room after-wards and talked a while longer. Then Rudo stifled a few yawns, said something about the altitude, and decided to go to bed. I went out and spent the night walking, about the town and into the country. There’s something about walking at night, when things are slow and quiet, that I’ve always enjoyed.

“And this place was very quiet, and very dark, once I got out from town. Sitting on a hillside later and listening to the insects and looking at the stars, I realized that I was really happy. I didn’t have to do drugs anymore, I wasn’t afraid of sleeping and waking up in God knows what shape, and pretty soon I’d be able to pass for normal. I felt like I wanted to sing or something, but I didn’t. I just sat there and watched the night and listened to it and felt good.

“In the morning I walked back and paced the streets again and watched the town wake up. The first place I saw that opened I went in and had breakfast. Then I went back to the hotel and waited for Rudo to wake up. When he had, and had gotten himself into shape, we went downstairs and ate. We took our time over coffee, and I had a few more snacks, while we waited for the office to open for our visitors’ passes.

“After we picked up the papers we headed for the car. Ruda drove, taking us over to the Taos Highway and following it northward, in the direction of the Espanola Valley. Somewhere along the way we passed a big rock off to the left shaped like a camel. The sun was very bright, and there were mountains to the left of us and mountains to the right. After a long while, Rudo found us a road which went off to the left, switching its way back and forth upward among orange cliffs. We went higher and higher, and there was no guard rail. The views became spectacular, the drop frightening. There were more pine trees, and big boulders, and orange buttes. At least, Rudo seemed a careful driver.

“After a long while, things leveled off and we continued on a level plane. A little later, we saw a military gate in a barbed wire fence blocking the road, a tank parked on either side of it. We slowed and came to a halt before it. One of the guards approached us, and we presented him with our passes. He checked to be sure that we matched the photos. When he was satisfied, he opened the gate and had us drive through and park. Then he placed a phone call and told us that our party would be down to meet us shortly.

“We waited, and about ten minutes later a car came down the road. It pulled up near us and parked. Its driver got out and came around to greet Rudo, calling him ’Karamazov’ as they shook hands. He was a tall, pale, blond fellow. Named Scott Swensen. He clapped me on the shoulder when we were introduced, and he suggested that I ride with him and Rudo follow us in our car to the Lodge.

“As we drove into the town we passed a small airport to the right. Scott gestured to the left about then and said, ’Look over there.’

“I did, and across a canyon, on a mesa, I saw a collection of green wooden shacks enclosed by a barbed wire fence. There were several armed guards at the fence’s gate. Ahead, I could see where the canyon ended and one could reach the place on level land.

“ ‘Unimpressive bit of local architecture,’ Scott said, ’eh?’

“I shrugged.

“ ‘Whatever gets the job done, I guess,’ I replied. ’What’s it look like?’ I asked. ’Big bars? Chunks of coal?’

“ ‘Naw,’ he said, chuckling. ’They can only process it in minuscule quantities—a few drops in the bottom of a vial. You could pick up one of those little gray containers and stick it in your pocket—almost.’

“ ‘You make it sound easy,’ I said.

“He laughed. ’I understand you’re strong as all shit,’ he said, ’the kind of guy who might be able to tear his way through that barbed wire fence, overpower the guards, kick his way into the storage building and help himself to a couple of plutonium containers.

“ ‘Funny, I was just thinking about that.’

“ ‘Wouldn’t work,’ he said. ’You might be able to do all of that, but you’d never get away with it. You’d be stopped at the gate if you went that way. And the part of this town that doesn’t have a fence abuts a wilderness. They’ve got mounted patrols back there with dogs. But say you got past, either way. You’d still be a hell of a distance from anything that could take you far enough away, fast enough. A massive manhunt would be mobilized very quickly. But this time it wouldn’t just be a few guards. There’d be aerial surveillance as well as ground-level parties. You’d be up against squads and squads of trained men with heavy firepower. Even if you won a skirmish or two, you’d never make it. You probably would make headlines all over the world, though.’

“ ‘I understand that they take this stuff seriously,’ I said. ’But I won’t be overpowering anybody, and I won’t be leaving here with anything I didn’t come in with.’

“ ‘You’ve found a better way to go about it?’

“ ‘I intend to.’

“ ‘Well, I’m Security, and I don’t see one.’

“ ‘Just get me to the Lodge. I’ll take care of the rest.’

“ ‘And leave in the morning without it and figure a way to come back for it later?’

“ ‘Right, he answered. ’Exactly right. What you are looking at there is the DP Site.’

“ ‘Please translate,’ I said.

“ ‘Stands for deuterium and plutonium,” he answered. ’They use the one to derive the other. They do it in there. It’s the plutonium you’re interested in, I understand. Hard to come by.’

“ ‘More or less.’

“He laughed again and clapped me on the shoulder. You know, I admire that,’ he said, ’and I’m really curious what you’ll work out to try.’

“For all I knew, Swensen could be playing a game with Rudo, having conned him into bringing in an ace burglar to test the Security apparatus. I’d no idea how deep their relationship might run. And even if he was on our side, the fewer people who know your business the better. Suddenly, I wondered what the repercussions on aces and jokers might be if I were to mess it up and get caught. It occurred to me suddenly that it could be major.

“I laughed and clapped him on the shoulder. “ ‘You’ll find out afterwards,’ I said.

“We arrived at Fuller Lodge a little later. Rudo pulled into the parking space beside us.

“ ‘I’;; go inside with you,’ Scott said, ’see you checked in.’

“ ‘Thanks,’ I told him, and we got out of the cars. ’You going to join us for lunch?’ I asked then.

“ ‘I’ve already eaten,’ he replied, ’and I’ve got to get back to work. Tell you what. I’ll come by around six-thirty and have dinner with you.’

“ ‘Sounds good to me,’ I said, and Rudo nodded. “We began walking toward the Lodge.

“ ‘Are there any restrictions if I just want to take a walk?’ I asked.

“ ‘No,’ he answered, ’and you’ve got passes giving you a right to be here. Walk around. Go anywhere you want. If you get too near something that’s off-limits, someone will just tell you. Oh, and don’t take any pictures.’

“ ‘didn’t even bring a camera,’ I said. ’But tell me, how would the people at an off-limits place know that I wasn’t supposed to be there?’

“ ‘You need an access badge to enter secure facilities,’ he said. ’If I were to get you one, it would be too easy to trace back to me. Sorry. My hands have to stay clean. can’t afford to leave any tracks on this matter.’

“ ‘No problem,’ I told him.

“ ‘We entered, got checked in, and he bade us good noon. We went to our room then and washed up. Aftwards, we headed for the dining room for our late lunch.

“On the dining room wall, to the side of the archway, was a framed newspaper clipping with a photo. Curious, wandered over and read it after I’d ordered.

“The photo was of a man, a scientist, named Klaus Fuchs, who had once worked here. The story, which I remembered from the previous year, told how Fuchs had given key hydrogen bomb secrets to a Soviet agent—in the interest of world peace,’ as Fuchs had put it—the actual communication of this information having taken place on the Castillo Street Bridge in Santa Fe, over which I’d passed the previous night when walking out Canyon Road way. I remembered the story as I read it. At the bottom of the piece, in red ballpoint, was written, ’Security is Everybody’s Business,’ and it was signed by Scott Swensen. I tried to figure how observation of that injunction could have stopped Mr. Fuchs, but I failed. Could I get this sort of press, I wondered, and be hung here?

“After a comprehensive lunch I stretched and told Rudo, ’I think I’ll take a walk now.’

“I’ll join you,’ he said.

“ ‘You don’t really want to,’ I said, exerting my new power for the first time. ’What you really want is to take a nap, since you’ve gotten so sleepy.’

“Immediately, he began to yawn.

“ ‘You’re right,’ he said. ’I am tired. What I really want is to go back to the room and stretch out and go to sleep.’

“Do it, then,’ I told him. ’do it now.’

“He got to his feet. ’Have a good walk,’ he said, and he departed the dining room.

“After I’d settled up, I stepped outside and sniffed the air. A great day for walking. I headed back down Jemez Road in the direction from which we had come.

“When I came to the place where the shoulder of land continued out past the end of the canyon and led to the gate of the DP Site, I took that route. As I approached the gate two armed guards approached it from the other side.

“ ‘Hey, buddy,’ one of them called out. ’This place is off-limits unless you’re authorized personnel.’

“ ‘I am authorized personnel,’ I told him. ’I’m a general—three stars. You can see them now. You can also see my badge and my pass. I’m here to make a special inspection; You want to open the gate for me so I can do that.’

“ ‘Just a minute, sir,’ the nearer one said. ’Sorry I didn’t recognize you. That bright sunlight at your back...

“He hurried to unlock the gate.

“As I entered, he said, ’The sign-in sheet’s in the first building, sir.’

“ ‘Take me there.’

“I followed him inside and glanced at the form he placed on a desk before me. For a moment, I was tempted to sign Swensen’s name. But I didn’t want to get the man in trouble just to be cute. I touched the pen to the form and handed it back to the guard.

“ ‘There, I signed it,’ I told him. ’You saw me do it.’

“ ‘Yes, sir,’ he replied. ’Thank you. What is it you would like to inspect, sir?’

“ ‘The plutonium storage place,’ I said. ’Take me there.’

“ ‘Right this way, sir.’

“He opened the door for me, followed me outside and led me to another, similar looking green shack. Two more guards passed near, casting curious glances our They must have assumed everything was in order as I was escorted, and they continued past us. I called one over, though.

“ ‘This is a special inspection,’ I told them. ’We need you to accompany us into the plutonium sector.’

They followed me into the building, where the first guard led me back to a rack which held a number of gray containers. He stopped before it and looked at it.

“ ‘That’s the stuff?’ I asked him.

“ ‘Yes, sir,’ he replied.

“I studied them long and hard—size, texture, shape. Finally, I reached out and hefted one, held it a moment, replaced it. I wiped it carefully with my handkerchief then and nodded.

“Everything is in order,’ I announced. ’Let’s go back outside.’

“We departed the building and I halted to study it and its position in relation to the other buildings.

“ ‘Good,’ I stated. ’The inspection is finished. You men are doing a fine job. I am going to sign out now and then I am going to leave.’

“I returned to the first building where I repeated my sign-in procedure. Then I had all of them accompany me to the gate.

“ ‘This inspection was so secret,’ I told them, ’that you are going to forget it occurred. As soon as that gate closes behind me I will begin walking. As soon as I am out of sight you will forget that you ever saw me. This inspection will not have happened. Open the gate.’

“They swung it wide before me and I stepped through and headed back to the Lodge. I picked up some magazines, went back to the room and read them while Rudo slept.

“At a little after six, I roused him and suggested he get ready for dinner. He did that, and Swensen proved punctual. We had an enjoyable meal, Swensen having a collection of jokes I hadn’t heard, which kept me chuckling through dessert.

“Over coffee, he said, ’I guess you’ll be about your business soon. Good luck.

“ ‘It is finished,’ I said. ’I know what I need to know now. Thanks.’

“ ‘He stared at me. ’How could you have?’ he asked.

“ ‘It was easier than you might think. We’ll be leaving in the morning.’

“ ‘He shook his head.

“ ‘I’m not sure whether to believe you,’ he said. I smiled.

“ ‘It doesn’t matter,’ I said. ’doesn’t matter at all.’

“We departed the following morning, making it back to La Fonda in time for lunch. I’d explained to Rudo that I had to know the appearance and physical location of something in order to teleport it, and that I had succeeded in zeroing in on the plutonium in this fashion. Now the only thing that I needed was the ability to teleport. Not to the minimal extent I’d possessed it that day I’d walked into his office holding my water, but a bit more heavy-duty and longer-range—a thing I had had experience with in the past. Rudo seemed confident this could be achieved with another bout of dauerschlaf. After all, he had a perfect batting average—with Bogie, and this time around with my appearance and the hypnotic persuasive ability. So I told him to make me a teleporter, and he said ’No problem.’ and we repaired to our room after dinner.

“Only one thing seemed slightly strange that afternoon. When Rudo opened a drawer to get out his medical kit with the dauerschlaf drugs, I caught a glimpse of a large photo lying beside it. I would have sworn it was a picture of Klaus Fuchs.

“And so, I stretched out on the bed, as he directed, and he administered the first of the drugs. As the world began to swim away, I realized that I was happy. Rudo began speaking to me softly. His voice was a distant thing...

This one was different. There was the long dark time I always know. But it seemed that at some point I awoke briefly, did something, and went back to sleep again, visions of the gray containers dancing momentarily behind my eyes.

“When the real awakening occurred it was more than a little traumatic. Someone had hold of my shoulder and was shaking me, shouting at me.

“ ‘Wake up, you bastard! You’re under arrest!’ a large, uniformed individual was calling, as I tried to focus my eyes.

“I groaned, then, ’Awright! Awright!’ I said. ’What’s going on?’

“I was dragged to my feet, supported there, still trying to throw off the effects of my long sleep. I saw another cop then—much shorter, mustached—over by the dresser. He was holding one of the gray containers from the DP Site. Another still rested on the dresser.

“ ‘The stuff is even labeled as property of the Lab,’ he was saying.

“ ‘Get dressed, Fuchs—or is it Crenson?’ the larger one said. ’That the name you’re using this time? And if you so much as breathe a suspicious breath I might get very nervous.’ He patted his sidearm.

“ ‘I’ll hold my breath,’ I said, patting my pants as I donned them, to be sure the wallet was still there, if Rudo hadn’t run off with the money. I’d had a lot in it, and I wanted it near.

“ ‘Why are you arresting me?’ I asked.

“ ‘If you don’t know that you’re stupider than you look,’ the big one answered.

“ ‘Tell me anyhow,’ I said. Okay? Who said I did whatever I’m supposed to have done?’

“He shrugged.

“ ‘We had a telephone tip that you were here. He didn’t give his name. We’re just going to hold you for the feds. They’ll be up from Albuquerque in the morning to pick you up.’

“It was dark outside the window. I could hear a car passing on the street below. They let me put on my socks and shoes before they handcuffed me. I tried to figure what might have happened. All I could see was that Rudo had set me up. He’d kept his hypnotic control—maybe by means of post-hypnotic suggestion—when I’d come out of dauerschlaf. Then he’d told me to teleport the plutonium containers here, as he knew I’d planned, and I’d done it. Then he’d put me back to sleep, leaving the evidence in plain sight, had cleared out, had made that phone call. The only thing I couldn’t see in it was why? But if I needed any evidence of such intent—or of his twisted sense of humor—I got it as the cops hustled me out. I caught a glimpse of myself in the dresser’s mirror as I passed by. I was a dead ringer for the man in the photograph, Klaus Fuchs. Security is everybody’s business. .

“They drove me over, though the station was only two blocks away. There, I surrendered my wallet, which they said they’d keep safe for me. I was able to determine on handing it over that my money was still in it. I hoped it would stay there. I was conducted back to a cell then and locked up. I might have made a break on the way over, or even there in the station before they locked me up. But I was still disorganized, and I wanted a little time to think.

“So all I did was watch which key it was on his chain that my jailer used to lock my cell. As he turned away, I already had hold of it with my mind. I teleported it into my right hand and put it in my pocket. I went and sat down on my bunk. I’d been in better jails and I’d been in worse. At least I knew where this one was located in relationship to everything else in the area, from my

walk the other night. There was no point in escaping unless you knew where you were going and what you were going to do.

“After perhaps twenty minutes I had decided what to do. So I got up, unlocked the door, stepped out, and close it behind me. I passed a small room from within which I heard sounds of typing. No need to look for trouble. I continued on.

“There were two cops up front. One was drinking coffee and the other was talking to someone on the telephone me. I backed up beyond the doorframe and waited for the sound of the phone being cradled. The safe wherein they’d stowed my wallet was an old one, of a sort Bentley’d taught me to open in the dark.

I moved in quickly whcn I heard the telephone drop into place. It took one calculated punch each to render the cops unconscious. Then I propped them in their chairs to look as if they were dozing. The safe was old and crochety and started taking longer than I’d thought it would. I didn’t want to give it another five ’or tcn I minutes, though, so I braced it with a foot and a hand

and started pulling. I wasn’t able to tear the door off, but I buckled it enough to be able to reach inside and get my wallet. I pocketed it then and walked out, taking a right on Washington Avenue.

“I continued along this until I came to the road to Hyde Park, where I turned and started to climb. I knew that it would eventually pass through a part of the National Forest. I could find myself a good place to hide out there before morning. And I did.”

Croyd rose, stretched, returned to the cooler, came back with two beers. He set one before Hannah. He backhanded a moth.

“End of story,” he said, “except for an Indian ace I met who could change the patterns on rugs into whatever was selling best, just by running his hands over them. I got away. Now can I buy you a drink?”

“Yes, now I’m thirsty,” she said, reaching out and holding the bottle as he opened it. “But how did you get out of town?”

“I lived on roots and people’s picnic remains for over a week,” he said. “Then, with a short beard and wearing a pair of sunglasses I’d found, I took a chance and hiked back to town and bought a load of food and took it back to the forest with me. Lived on that until I got sleepy. Sacked out then in a rocky shelter I’d set up. When I woke a couple of weeks later I was a slim blond guy with the ability to shout at ultrasonic levels and knock people out or just make them uncomfortable, depending on how high I raised my voice and for how long. I went down to town then, got a ride out to Lamy, took a train back to New York.”

“And Rudo?” she asked, sipping the beer. “Did you ever see Pan Rudo again?”

“Yes,” he said. “Looked him up when I got to town. Got into his apartment building one day and picked the lock to his pad, waited there for him.”

“And?”

“Of course, he didn’t recognize me. He looked startled when he saw me, but he just said, ’If this is a robbery, take whatever you want. I don’t need any trouble.’

“I caught hold of his shirtfront and pulled him forward till his face was within an inch of my own. At first I’d planned to kill him, but then I decided it just wasn’t worth it. Hell, maybe he was even helping some of his patients.

“ ‘It’s me, Croyd Crenson,’ I said, and he must have thought I was going to kill him because he went pale as a bone. Then, ’Just tell me why you did it,’ I said. ’Why’d you set me up?’

“ ‘I guess he figured he had nothing to lose if he was going to die. His lip curled then, and he said, ’You’re genetic garbage, you and all of the others! I hate what you have done to the race! I wanted to disgrace the lot of you--publicly, seriously! You got lucky, though.’

“I hit him then, in the mouth, twice, and I split his lip. I threw him down on his couch and used my handkerchief to wipe the blood off my hand. But it kept coming. I realized then that I’d cut a knuckle on his tooth.

“ ‘I’m not going to kill you now,’ I told him. ’But one of these days— Who knows?"’I left then, and when I checked a bit later I discovered that he’d moved out. And that is the story of something that might have hurt me and led to a lot of bad will toward jokers and aces in general, what with all the HUAC paranoia that was in the air.”

“Thanks,” she said, taking a swallow and shutting down her recorder.

She cased the recorder and placed it in her shoulderbag, along with the clipboard.

“So much for business,” Croyd said. “How’s about having dinner with me?”

She slung the bag over her shoulder and moved toward the door.

“Sorry,” she said. “I’ve got to organize a lot of notes tonight, and I’ll be leaving fairly early in the morning.”

“You prejudiced against guys with tails?” he said.

She removed a collapsible umbrella from her bag and opened it. She smiled then.

“No, Croyd,” she said. “But I’ll be keeping mine to myself. Good evening,” and she turned and walked off into the shadows and the drizzle.

Croyd stood in the doorway, watching until she was out of sight. Then he turned back to the empty bar.

“Play it, Sam,” he said softly, and racks of glasses began to sing. A horde of flies chose that moment to swarm about him. Cursing, he swatted at them. Their buzzing took on the sounds of a tune.