The MARTIAN and the MILKMAID

By FRANCES M. DEEGAN

Illustrated by Hadden

He arrived in the midst of a storm, as a meteor struck the earth. Who was this man with the strange, compelling eyes; what was his amazing mission?

THE road was impossible. What it was doing to my car for the duration was the last straw.

The fact that the Diacol Company allowed their field geologists six cents a mile was no help if the car was shaken to jittering, irreplaceable bits, while I chased meteorites in the wilds of North Dakota.

More than once in the past six weeks I'd had cause to reflect on the diabolical tendency of meteors on the loose to select the most inaccessible localities as a place to sit down.

So far my quest had been conspicuously lacking in success. I had visited the last resting places of three alleged meteors without finding what I was supposed to be looking for—an enriched deposit of diatomaceous silicon dioxide.

My confidential reports to Diacol had begun to take on a somewhat bitter tone, which elicited nothing but cheerful, back-slapping letters of encouragement. All written by executives lolling comfortably in their air-conditioned offices, while I clattered over rutted, stone-imbedded back roads, assailed by insects, heat, and at the moment a finely powdered alkali dust which penetrated everywhere and tasted like sulphur.

I was tired, sore, hot, and limp with hunger. Every jolt added to my angry discomfort and I made up my mind then and there that if this one fizzled out, as I had no doubt it would, the only sensible procedure was to take a week off and go on a quiet, methodical binge. Preferably with moronic companions who were not concerned with expired meteors and their possible effect on fossilized deposits.

Some one like Hebe, for instance. Blond, buxom, generous and mentally enervating—but physically restful. Yes, Hebe would be eminently satisfactory—after I had finished my visit with Mr. and Mrs. Henshaw.

The Henshaw farmstead, when it finally hove in sight, was a weather-beaten collection of sagging frame structures. A narrow lane turned off the road where a rural delivery mail box leaned tipsily, and meandered toward the gray huddle with discouraging reluctance. In the sunset glow house and barns seemed to be floating like a disembodied mirage in an unnatural crimson mist.

Mr. and Mrs. Henshaw came forth to greet me. They matched the buildings and general atmosphere of the place. They were old and gray and weather-beaten. But they were cordial enough.

"Howdy," the old man said. "You must be this here new science feller wrote us a while back about comin' to

His eyes met mine, and it seemed as if I were being studied from every angle

investigate our meteor. My name's Bill Henshaw—this here's Margie, my wife."

"Glad to know you." I got out of the car stiffly and shook hands with each of them. "My name's Howard Clement. Hope I'm not putting you out by my visit."

"Goshamighty, no. Tickled to have you. We don't get much company way off here, an' there's only Margie an' me an' the Gook—"

"Bill, don't stand there a-gabbin'," Margie interrupted. "Help Mr. Clement get his things unloaded. I 'spect he could do with a wash and somethin' to eat. I'll just put the coffee pot on an' have a snack dished up, time you get inside. Step lively now." She bustled into the house followed by my heartfelt approval and blessing.

BILL gazed at my collection of field equipment as I unloaded it and stacked it on the back porch. He moved his battered felt hat to one side and scratched his head.

"I-gollies!" he opined. "Never see such a lotta contraptions. We'll have to put all this away some place where the Gook can't get at it. Quite a one for tinkerin', Gook is. Always takin' things apart an' puttin' 'em back together some other way."

I straightened with an exasperated scowl. "Nobody," I declared, "touches any part of my equipment. I want that understood right now."

Bill reversed his hat and scratched the opposite side of his grizzled thatch. "Trouble is," he said, "Gook, he don't understand things like most people does. Ain't no use tellin' him to leave things alone—he just goes and tinkers anyhow."

"Who the hell is this Gook?" I exploded. "Can't you control him? What is he—a maniac?"

"Ain't no cause to get riled up," Bill said mildly. "Gook, he's a kind of idjit, but he don't mean no harm. An' sometimes he does right good with his tinkerin'. You'd be surprised."

"There'll be no half-wit tinkering with my equipment!" I shouted. "This stuff is worth more than your whole farm, and even if you could afford it, half of it couldn't be replaced today. There happens to be a war going on. You let me catch your Gook within ten feet of my stuff and I'll twist his arms out and beat his head off—I'll—"

"Now, now," Bill said soothingly. "Don't go gettin' all het up. Reckon you're plumb tuckered out with your trip an' all. You'll feel better directly you eat somethin' an' rest up a spell. Meantime we'll just cart all your contraptions inside an' shove 'em under your bed where they'll be outa sight."

"If you think I'm going to set up my field laboratory under the bed, you're crazier than your damn Gook!" I sputtered. "I'll pile it all back in the car and drive back to town before I'll put up with any such nonsense. I'm about fed up with this whole business anyway—"

My sputtering died away in angry mumbling. Bill had hoisted the portable microscope and disappeared into the house with it. And I was confronted with nothing more tangible than the fragrant aroma of boiling coffee and a clatter of heavy dishes, that was somehow associated with the thought of country ham and eggs and fried potatoes and homemade bread . . .

I picked up a case of slides and followed Bill into the house.

AS IT turned out, there was ham and fried potatoes, and thick slices of homemade bread with heavy yellow butter—but no eggs.

"Couple eggs would go good with this," Bill remarked, as if reading my mind. "But Gook, he's hatchin' the eggs. Got a kind of incubator rigged up with oil lamps. Takes about three settin's a year and does pretty good with 'em. Makes a little change off the fryers an' keeps the best stock to build up next year's flock. Got so we got about the best chickens round about here. People come all the way 'cross state to buy a few hens or settin' eggs. I don't know—Gook, he's got a kind of knack with things like that. Don't know what we'd done without him last thirty-forty years."

"It's forty-three years since he come, an' you know it," Margie said. "Come same time that there meteor did, in the storm an' all—an' him wanderin' around without a stitch to his back."

"Yessir, that's right," Bill said, putting down his thick cup. "Be forty-three years come August. Hot—it was hot as all get out that year. 1901 it was an' I had forty acres planted in wheat. Well sir, that there danged meteor plowed up the whole forty. Then there come a cloud burst, drowned out everythin' else. An' next day we find Gook wanderin' around, buck naked an' lost as a homeless squirrel. Yessir, we sure was wrecked that time, but we never made no mistake when we took Gook in."

"Escaped he was," Margie put in. "In the storm an' excitement an' all. He sure was abused, pore thing. Had lumps an' bruises all over him—an' dazed! My lands, he just laid for days without movin' or makin' a sound. Took a long time before we made him understand we wasn't going to hurt him no more. Then he begun to sit up an' take notice of things. Couldn't even talk sensible. You remember, Bill, what a time we had teachin' him words. I guess whoever had him locked up never took no trouble with him. All he kept sayin' was 'Gook! Gook!' So that's what we called him—Gook. An' he seemed satisfied with it."

"That was your doin'," Bill acceded with rough pride. "Margie, she's got a way with hurt birds, an' sick pigs, an' things like that. She kinda took a shine to the Gook from the first an' they got along first rate. So 'course I didn't have no choice. I just kinda strung along, an' pretty soon I see where the Gook, he don't mean no harm, he just wants to be let alone. So we let him alone, an' he don't hurt nothin'—much."

I tried to get a word in about the necessity of safeguarding my equipment, but these two had gone too long without an audience. I hadn't a chance.

"Hurt nothin'!" Margie sniffed. "I should say he don't. 'Course he wrecked the windmill a couple times. But he finally got it to workin' better than it ever did. An' the way he fixed up my old washer an' wringer—well—"

"Margie, she's got patience," Bill explained. "She goes by the end result. Thing don't work first few times, she bides her tongue an' waits it out, an' first thing you know, sure as shootin', she's got what she wants. Never see it to fail. Her an' Gook, they got a kind of understandin'. Somethin' don't just suit her an' pretty soon Gook, he's tinkerin' with it. An' then 'fore you know it, it's workin' like a clock."

"Set!" Margie said suddenly, and I looked up and the Gook was with us.

TALL and slender and dark-skinned, he had a queer olive green tinge, and wore black glasses. He moved with a graceful, flowing motion that wasted no effort, like an animal, or a nerveless half-wit. He sat and he spoke.

"Howdy," he said, and because I was

tired and all my senses felt like they had been tramped on, I experienced the sudden chill I sometimes have in dreams when I find myself standing on the brink of a vast, unknown void. I had to shake myself mentally to answer his mellow, vibrant greeting.

"Howdy," I said, somewhat stupidly, and then stared aghast as he calmly accepted a cup of Margie's excellent coffee and dumped a large helping of homemade chili sauce into his cup.

Bill chuckled, and said, "Gook, he's real fond of Margie's ketchup. Puts it on about everythin' he eats."

"I think he's anemic, myself," Margie said. "He just naturally craves red-blooded food."

"Remember the time we butchered the hog?" Bill said, and was promptly silenced by a severe glance from Margie.

I began to feel decidedly uncomfortable, especially since the creature paused in his eating every once in a while to direct a long, blank stare at me from behind the black glasses. I had no confidence at all in Bill's assertion that he was harmless. He looked lethal as a lynx to me.

He was dressed, like Bill, in faded blue shirt and overalls, but he bore no resemblance to any farmer I had ever seen. He had amazingly long, graceful hands and the long head and fawn-like ears of a satyr. The last rays of the setting sun touched his fine black hair, showing purple tints. Repeated use of certain hair dyes, I knew, gave the hair a purple tint, and I began to wonder just what the naive Bill and Margie were concealing here on their remote farm.

"What's your interest in this here meteor, Mr. Clement?" Bill asked. "You figgerin' on tryin' to measure it, or what?"

"No, I merely want to see what effect it had on the soil and rock formations," I explained. "My company uncovered an unusually rich deposit of diatoms* where a meteorite had landed about 150 years ago. Some hare-brained chemist got the idea that the meteor landed in that spot because the diatoms had a magnetic attraction for it, and that the mysterious composition of the meteor was responsible for enriching the deposit. I have been delegated to locate similar deposits wherever a meteor is reported to have landed. So far I have had no luck."

The Gook stared at me in blank silence.

"What's these here die—whatcha-callems?" Bill looked interested.

"Diatoms? They're dirt. Just plain dirt."

"Oh." Bill was disappointed. "Reckon we got plenty o' that."

"What good is it, if you find it?" Margie asked practically.

"Commercially, it's a gold mine—if I find it," I said. "Diatomaceous earth has thousands of uses today. It's used in everything from explosives to perfume, and is necessary to every branch of industry from sugar refining to building materials."

"Whew-ee!" Bill puffed. "Never

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* DIATOMS are microscopic plants that thrive and multiply in moisture. They are found in any body of water and wherever moisture collects, even in our drinking water. They die, become fossilized and gradually form a deposit of earth. A cubic inch of commercially valuable deposit contains from twenty to seventy-five million dead diatoms. This diatomaceous earth has thousands of uses, some of the more important being high temperature insulation, insulating cement and refractory bricks; filtration of food products, pharmaceutical supplies, wines and liquors, and many types of industrial liquids; filler material for a wide number of products, such as paints, molded plastics, battery box compositions, flooring and roofing materials, asphalt, rubber and paper. It is also used in soaps, cosmetics, inks, abrasives, etc.; the list is endless, and still growing as research scientists continue their experiments with the raw material.—Ed.

knew dirt could be that useful. How can you tell when you find it?"

"You can't without a microscope," I said. "And even then it requires extensive laboratory tests to determine the value of the deposit. But don't let me get your hopes up." I was already kicking myself for having talked too much, as I do sometimes when I am tired. "Actually I don't expect to find anything. I think that chemist was having a pipe dream."

"More than likely." Bill readily dismissed the onerous prospect of owning a commercial gold mine.

He was, in his way I suppose, a philosopher, who accepted life without complaint or too much curiosity. For this I was thankful since I was in no mood to have a greedy farmer breathing down my neck while I went about my tests. It was bad enough to contemplate the forceful tactics that might be necessary to ward off the tinkering proclivities of the Gook.

I EXCUSED myself from the table and went out to examine my car to make sure it was securely locked before going upstairs to my room. It was hot and close in the room and I left the door open.

Tired as I was, I wanted to check my equipment to see how it had withstood the trip, and have everything in readiness for an early start in the morning. The sooner I got this one over, the quicker I would be on my way back to civilization and that binge with Hebe.

I thought of her as I made my preparations and realized that I had not fully appreciated her restful qualities heretofore. Ordinarily she bored me. Her vacuous and totally innocent blue eyes, her plump blonde prettiness, and her complete lack of sense had always left me cold. Hebe, whose name originally was no doubt Susie or Mabel, was one of the Broadway characters who had come to be included in the somewhat cosmopolitan group who made up my acquaintances in New York.

She was definitely out of place on Broadway. She should have been a comfortable farm wife and mother, as nature intended. Instead she was a Broadway character. A few years before she had won a milking contest at a county fair. Part of the reward was a trip to the World's Fair, where she continued to demonstrate her milking technique, billed as Hebe, Goddess of the Dairy.

Somehow she never did get around to going back home again. She married, of course. The fellow was a fifth rate fighter, at least partially punch drunk, and never seemed to be home.

He was always "on the road" traveling the small time boxing circuits, preparing to stage a come back. This was a somewhat mystifying process, since he had never been anywhere worth coming back to as far as boxing annals were concerned. Hebe, of course, had children with regular frequency and astonishingly little inconvenience. At latest reports there were four of them, all blond, beautiful, and good tempered . . .

It was perhaps significant that at this point in my thoughts of Hebe, I straightened up from examining and loading my camera, and discovered that the Gook was with me. He prowled across the room with deliberate, catfooted silence and seated himself in the rocking chair.

We examined each other without speaking, and I thought that since it had to come some time, I might as well get this matter of the tinkering settled once and for all.

I selected a narrow steel yardstick and laid it in readiness on the patchwork quilt. The moment he extended

one of those long, prehensible hands to touch anything I meant to give him a sharp lash across the wrist. Then as an afterthought I laid a short handled sledge hammer alongside it, and went on cleaning and arranging my equipment.

Except for my movement the room was very still. My visitor made no more sound than a sleeping cat, but I felt the stare behind those black glasses following my every gesture. I began to wonder about his eyes and the reason for the glasses. It also occurred to me that if he had lived on the farm for forty-three years he must have been very young when he arrived. I had somehow gotten the impression that he was full grown when Bill and Margie found him, but in that case he would now be a man of sixty and he scarcely looked forty. Some types of the mentally unsound, of course, were apt to retain their youthful appearance, but surely not past the age of sixty.

WHEN at last my equipment was all in order and he had made no move or sound, I stood there and stared back at him, trying to think of adequate words to express my desire to be relieved of his presence.

He spoke first, and his question nearly floored me.

"Are you intelligent?" he inquired.

"What? Certainly I'm intelligent!" I sputtered.

"In my experience," he said sadly, "nothing is less certain on this haphazard planet than intelligence. I do not believe real intelligence exists. It is pathetic."

I sat down on the bed with all my thoughts badly disarranged. "That's —er interesting," I said limply. "How did you arrive at that conclusion?"

"It is not interesting and we are not concerned with my general impression," he said. "At the moment I should like to know specifically how intelligent you are."

How high is up, I thought wildly, and wanted to laugh. Instead I decided to play along with him. "Why?" I demanded.

"Because if you have any intelligence at all, I intend to use it," he replied calmly. "It is quite clear that you are a different type than any I have come in contact with so far. I can assure you that you will not find any evidence of a fallen meteor here. Do you know why?"

"No, but I wish you'd tell me," I encouraged him. The uneasy conviction that I had a dangerous maniac on my hands was growing by the minute. This fellow was no half-wit.

His long hands floated up to his face and the glasses came away. His eyes were a greenish yellow in the dark, smooth face—flat, unwinking animal eyes, and then a spark appeared in their depths and I felt their force and knew a grinding fear. There was mesmerism in those eyes, and a powerful, if warped mentality behind it.

"I am not of your planet," he said slowly in that vibrant voice. "The so-called meteor was my ship, powered by energy from cosmic rays. The gravitational pull of your planet was too strong for the controls of the ship. It was totally destroyed, but the mechanism blasted me clear at the moment of contact with the earth. I came from the planet you call Mars."

Those dynamic eyes were on me and I suddenly imagined I heard the sound of singing distance and space, and I felt the cold sweep of timeless spheres. Unimaginable things started pawing at my brain, and I experienced again the chill I had known in dreams at the edge of the void.

I reminded myself angrily that I was

near exhaustion, that brain and nerves were not functioning normally, and that I must keep my head and handle this fellow tactfully.

"That—that's very interesting," I said lamely.

"You find it difficult to believe?"

"Very difficult."

"But you do not disbelieve?"

"Oh, no—no indeed," I assured him hastily, lest he decide to take persuasive measures.

"You have an open mind," he said. "You showed that when you refused to accept the theories of your chemist, although he is probably not so far wrong at that. The trouble is that what you have been investigating were not meteors, but other ships from my planet. We have been trying for some time to establish communication with your lush earth."

"That's a nice neighborly gesture," I said. "We must arrange to come and see you some time, too."

"You would not enjoy it," he said gravely. "Our planet is virtually sterile. We are rapidly losing the power of reproduction. That is why we are so interested in this prolific earth of yours. If we could transport some of the germs responsible for the lush growth and constant renewal of all forms of life, perhaps we might fertilize our weary old world. Had we not discovered the secret of longevity, our planet would almost certainly be completely barren by this time."

"Perhaps it is." I endeavored to match his gravity. "You've been away a good while now, haven't you? Almost half a century."

"That is a very brief period according to our measurement of time. I told you that we had the secret of longevity. How old would you say that I am?"

"Around forty."

"Forty of your short years?" I was beginning to realize that he never smiled or changed expression. "No. Measured by your time my age would be closer to 400, and that is comparatively young. That is why I can afford to be patient while waiting for your backward civilization to advance to the point where practical communications can be established between your world and mine."

"I imagine you do find it somewhat primitive off here in the wilderness," I declared inanely. "I could show you a somewhat different stage of advancement in New York."

He wafted himself out of the rocking chair like slow smoke and bowed formally. "I shall be happy to accompany you," he said. Then he was gone. And I seemed to have got myself a Gook . . .

I DID not rest at all well that night. When I did fall asleep I kept bumping over a rutted road only to arrive at the brink of the familiar black void, with the chill of fathomless space reaching for me. As a result I overslept and came downstairs with an overgrown grouch.

Margie was alone in the kitchen. She already had the trusty coffee pot boiling on the oil stove, and she fussed over me as if I were her favorite child, grouch and all.

Any hope that I might have misunderstood matters the night before was quickly dissipated.

"Gook says he's figgerin' to go back with you," Margie informed me. "I think that's real nice of you, Mr. Clement. Do him a world of good to get away for a spell, and he seems right fond of you."

"He's attached to me, all right," I admitted glumly. "You were telling me yesterday that you had to teach him words at first. He seems to have progressed amazingly."

"Yessir, I'm real proud of the way he took hold an' just kep' a-studyin' all these years. I started him out with a little old reader I had, an' he always did show an interest in books. I remember how he used to puzzle over the mail order catalogs when they come."

"He must have had something more than mail order catalogs," I objected.

"Oh, he did," Margie admitted happily. "About fifteen years ago when they built the big consolidated school at the county seat, they auctioned off a whole slew of things out of the little country schools. We got some real valuable books for almost nothin'. One of them big, fat dictionaries—of course the cover was gone, but all the words was there."

I absorbed this speech gloomily. She couldn't be making all that up. It was too pat and altogether too possible.

"He must have been pretty young when you found him," I suggested.

"Well sir, that's another remarkable thing." She wiped her hands on her apron thoughtfully. "He ain't changed a mite since the day he come here. Would you believe it?"

"I guess I'll have to," I sighed, and finished my coffee.

I loaded my gear into the car and drove off across bumpy hillocks toward the burial site of the meteor-Martianship. It was simply a ragged field—nothing more. The whole farm showed signs of neglect, and I had an idea that after viewing the disastrous results forty-three years ago, Bill had never again ventured to draw down the wrath of the heavens by planting wheat or anything else in large quantities.

My preliminary tests were sufficient to convince me that here was no diatomaceous deposit, but only rich black loam that needed to be planted. Nevertheless I continued my examination in the hope of finding some evidence that a large hot body had hurled itself at the field. There was nothing, of course. The cloud burst that followed the thing and forty years of wind and rain had leveled the field. Short of excavating the whole place, there was no sure way of determining what had buried itself here.

At noon I drove back to the house, framing caustic phrases to be included in my next report to Diacol, and pondering the possibility of putting the Gook on my expense account.

"Feeding, clothing and transporting one Gook—$673.58."

Something like that. That ought to cure the executive committee of sending me out after defunct meteorites . . .

NEW YORK was unpleasantly hot when we arrived. I had left the car and stored most of my equipment in Bismarck where my questionable companion was outfitted in a conservative city suit and accessories. His appearance and manner were ultra-civilized. Several pairs of dark glasses insured concealment of his cat eyes at all times, and liberal applications of olive oil darkened the purple tints in his hair.

We took a train to Chicago where we had to stop over a day and a half, waiting for plane reservations. It was here that we had an understanding and devised a name and personality to fit the erstwhile Gook. That actually was his name, he insisted.

I had no intention of introducing him anywhere as a Martian. This was not out of consideration for the Gook, but simply for my own protection. I could visualize the frenzied mobs that would greet any such announcement—we would both undoubtedly be torn to pieces in very short order.

I explained all this over a bottle of Scotch in our hotel room. He liked the Scotch and I promised him that if he

would quit pouring catsup all over everything he ate, he could have a regular ration of Scotch. He was perfectly agreeable to this and to all my suggestions.

Since he was obviously the wrong color for a pure Caucasian, I determined to represent him as an East Indian of mixed parentage. A highly cultured refugee who did not wish to speak of his experiences, nor of his former life.

I christened him George—George Guk. And then I got right down to business and told him plainly that I had no intention of supporting him indefinitely. I didn't care, I said, whether he was a visiting fireman from Mars or an escaped lunatic, the present economic system would not allow me to take on total dependents indiscriminately.

"Your economic system is absurd, of course," he said. "It is no system at all, but rather a symptom. A symptom of the barbaric confusion of your existence. You should abolish all economic theories."

"We won't go into that just now," I said. "Whatever your individual opinion is, the system or symptom is in effect, and we'll just have to abide by it for the time being. In other words, you'll have to earn your own way if you're going with me."

"That is regrettable," he said sadly.

"Lots of people feel that way about it," I told him. "I may be able to get you a fairly soft job, however, with Diacol. In every large company there is always a certain percentage of cush jobs for those that want them. As long as you remember to stick to your new personality of George Guk, you'll be all right. But you go making any funny statements about the climate on Mars, and you'll wake up in a padded cell."

"I would not care for that," he murmured.

"No, you would not," I said. "So just be sure to watch your step—for my sake as well as your own."

I was sticking my neck out, of course, but I was frankly curious. I could never have become a geologist had it not been for this insatiable curiosity of mine. I had a distinct aversion for the actual labor of my profession, but always that tantalizing wish to find out what the next stratum looked like would drive me on.

I THINK that what was largely responsible for driving me on in the case of George Guk was the fact that he refused to be impressed by the wonders of civilization. For a being who had supposedly spent the whole of his earthly existence on an isolated farm with no modern improvements, he was annoyingly critical of the radio, the telephone, electrical appliances, and even the plumbing fixtures. He was not petulant about it, he merely pointed out in a disinterested way that the plumbing backed up; the light globes burned out; the telephone sometimes got the wrong number; and the radio had fits of static.

He contended that it was rather silly to go to the expense and bother of making these things if they didn't work, and of course, he had me there. It was useless to explain that they were constantly being improved. He insisted that they should have been done right in the first place. As it was, he said, they simply added to the confusion we humans seemed bent upon creating.

The war, too, he considered merely a symptom of our barbarism. "Such things are wanton waste and should never be allowed to happen," he said. "But I suppose it is unavoidable in your present uncultured state. The trouble is, you have too much for your own good. You are glutted with a profusion of everything and so you turn to quar-

reling among yourselves, and wasting as much as possible in the frantic effort to use it up."

"The majority of the earth's population," I told him, "desire peace above everything else."

"My observations would not seem to indicate it," he replied. "I once assisted at the birth of a child. The woman was foolishly trying to get from one place to another before the child was born. She failed to make it and stopped at the Henshaw farm in the middle of the night. Mr. Henshaw hitched up the horses and drove off for a doctor. Mrs. Henshaw and I were forced to attend the woman. That child was fighting before he drew his first breath. You humans fight your way into the world, fight all through life, and then fight your way out again. It is senseless."

"Maybe. But it's fun," I said. "How would you have us do it?"

"At some distant time in the future this planet will have achieved the high degree of culture and intelligence which we, on our planet, have known for many centuries," he said. "Then all men will be truly equal. There will be no need for fighting and waste. The people of earth will look back on the history of rapacity and greed and double-dealing with abhorrence, and they will destroy all record and trace of their shameful ancestors. They will regard the sloth and filth and disease and discomfort of your present existence with repugnance. And they will be unable to understand your worship of money and your lust for puny possessions. All of life will be easy and graceful because intelligent humans will have learned to put their physical, mental and spiritual gifts to the highest and best use."

There was no use arguing with him. We simply weren't tuned in on the same wave length, so I let him have his opinion and he let me have mine. That's the way it was when we arrived in New York in the middle of June.

As soon as possible, I took him out to the plant and introduced him to the Personnel Director. I had pulled a few strings among the executives and the order went down the line to find a comfortable berth in the organization for my worthy refugee. Meanwhile he shared my apartment on Fifty-ninth Street.

SEVERAL days went by during which George Guk was given the run of the plant in order to familiarize himself with the organization, and I settled down to the volume of paper work that Diacol requires of everybody from the truck drivers to the vice presidents.

I looked up Hebe and she was as plumply soft and vacant-eyed as I had hoped she would be, but I did not go on a binge after all. Because Hebe lost all interest in me the minute she entered my apartment and saw the sleek George Guk. Since I had already explained Hebe to him, the fascination was mutual.

With the illegal help of one of my less respectable acquaintances, an imposing set of identification papers was furnished for my refugee, together with a medical certificate, which Diacol required of all employees. George Guk was quite emphatic about the inadvisability of letting a licensed practitioner examine him, though I must confess I was curious to find out what the professional judgment might be.

The affair between Hebe and George Guk seemed to be progressing at a disturbing rate, but there was really nothing I could do about it. I was more alarmed over the fact that he had landed in the experimental laboratory at the plant.

I made a few tactful inquiries, tending to question the wisdom of this; but

everybody was firmly convinced that he not only belonged there but was contributing valuable knowledge toward the production of some highly important secret.

Judging from his first month's pay, it must have been considered important. As soon as he got his check he came into my office and handed it to me without comment. It was nearly three times what I was getting.

I had to make a field trip in August. I was gone for three weeks and when I got back to New York, I learned what George Guk had been working on. He had fused a metal alloy with a Diacol fabrication to make a strong, light plastic material that was unaffected by intense heat or cold, withstood prolonged pressure of unbelievable strength, and was apparently impervious to all manner of stress and strain.

The immediate thought, of course, was to adapt it for plane use, and already a large experimental bomber of the latest secret design had been constructed. Preliminary tests had been amazing and on Sunday, two days hence, George Guk was going to take it up himself for first hand observation in order to make his final recommendations for its use.

When I heard this, I felt again the chill and pull of space—the black void. But that was nonsense, of course . . .

"How is the ship powered?" I asked the vice president in charge of production.

"Powered?" he snorted at me. "It's fueled with high octane, of course."

"That's what I thought," I said sheepishly, and went home and called Hebe. But Hebe had taken the children and gone to visit her folks on their Pennsylvania farm.

I SAT alone in the apartment and drank Scotch. George Guk was spending all his time at the secret air field until the trials were completed. Thus I spent two days in nervous suspense that I couldn't explain, even to myself . . .

The plane *was* powered with high octane gas, of course. And not even a full load, at that. It will be found sooner or later—or at least what is left of it. It was too bad to lose a brilliant worker like George Guk, but Diacol still has his formula for the plastic.

I wrote to Mr. and Mrs. Henshaw and told them the Gook was dead. He is dead, of course. There can't be any doubt about it.

The trouble is that Hebe has disappeared too. She took the family car that Sunday and drove off into the hills alone and that's the last anybody ever saw of her. There did happen to be a plane in the vicinity. Several people saw it, flying low as though it were going to land. But nobody could identify it.

I have been thinking that it would be quite a job to remove the wings from a big plane like that. And even with all the facilities of a complete modern laboratory like Diacol's at hand, it doesn't seem possible that any one individual could create the equipment necessary to power a plane with energy drawn from cosmic rays—even if they knew how.

Still, it's an amusing thought . . . that the placid Hebe may be on her way to Mars with the Gook . . . on her way to help repopulate a planet. . . .

THE END