

THE HUMOURS

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ALISTAIR CROMPTON WAS A STEREOTYPE, and he deeply resented the fact; but there was nothing he could do about it. Like it or not, his personality was monolithic, his desires predictable, and his fears apparent to anyone. To make matters worse, his somatotype fit his personality with inhuman perfection.

Crompton was of medium height, painfully thin, sharp-nosed and tight-lipped. His hairline was receding, his glasses were protuberant, his eyes glassy, his face sparse of stubble. He looked like a clerk. He was a clerk.

Glancing at him, anyone could tell that this man was petty, punctilious, cautious, nervous, puritanical, resentful, driven, circumspect and repressed. Dickens would have pictured him with an overblown sense of his own importance, perched on a high stool and scratching thinly in the dusty ledgers of some ancient and respectable company. A 13th century physician would have seen him as an embodiment of one of the four essential humours which rule the human temperament, and whose essences are to be found in the fundamental qualities of earth, air, fire and water. In Crompton's case it was the Melancholic Humour of Water, caused by too much cold, dry black bile, which tended to make him peevish and self-involved.

Moreover, Crompton was a triumph for Lombrose and Kretschmer, a self-contained cautionary tale, a Roman exaggeration, and a sad farce on humanity.

To make matters worse, Crompton was aware, fully and completely, of his thin, misshapen, predictable personality; aware of it, enraged by it, and unable to do anything about it except hate the well-meaning doctors who had brought it about.

On all sides of him, the envious Crompton saw people with all their marvellous complexities and contradictions, constantly bursting out of the stereotypes that society tried to force upon them. He observed prostitutes who were not good-hearted, army sergeants who detested brutality, wealthy men who never gave to charity, Irishmen who hated fighting, Greeks who had never seen a ship, Frenchmen with no sense of logic. Most of the human race seemed to lead lives of a wonderful and unpredictable richness, erupting into sudden passions and strange calms, saying one thing and doing another, repudiating their backgrounds, overcoming their limitations, confounding psychologists and sociologists, and driving psychoanalysts to drink.

But this splendor was impossible for Crompton, whom the doctors had stripped of complexity for sanity's sake.

Crompton, with a robot's damnable regularity, reached his desk promptly at nine o'clock every working morning of his life. At five he put his ledgers neatly aside and returned to his furnished room. There he ate a frugal meal of unappetizing health foods, played three games of solitaire, filled in one crossword puzzle, and retired to his narrow bed. Each Saturday night of his life Crompton saw a movie, jostled by merry and unpredictable teenagers. Sundays and holidays were devoted to the study of Euclidean geometry, for Crompton believed in self-improvement. And once a month Crompton would sneak to a newsstand and purchase a magazine of salacious content. In the privacy of his room he would devour its contents; then, in an ecstasy of self-loathing, rip the detestable thing to shreds.

Crompton was aware, of course, that he had been turned into a stereotype for his own good. He tried to adjust to the fact. For a while he cultivated the company of other slab-sided, centimeter-thin personalities. But the others he met were complacent, self-sufficient, and smug in their rigidity. They had been that way since birth; unlike Crompton, whom the doctors had changed at the age of eleven. He soon found that those like him were insufferable; and he was insufferable to anyone else.

He tried hard to break through the stifling limitations of his personality. For a while he considered emigrating to Venus or Mars, but never did anything about it. He applied to the New York Romance Service, and they arranged a date for him. Crompton went to meet his sweet unknown in front of Loew's Jupiter, with a white carnation pinned in his lapel. But within a block of the theater he was seized by a trembling fit, and forced to retreat to his room. That night he filled six crossword puzzles and played nine games of solitaire to soothe his nerves; but even this change was not lasting.

Try as would, Crompton couldn't help but act within the narrow confines of his character. His rage at himself and at the well-meaning doctors grew, and his need for self-transcendence increased accordingly.

There was only one way for him to acquire the amazing variety of possibilities, the contradictions, the passions, the humanness which other people had. So Crompton worked and waited, and at last reached the age of thirty-five. This was the minimum age of consent for Personality Reintegration as set by federal law.

On the day following his thirty-fifth birthday Crompton resigned his job, withdrew his carefully hoarded savings of seventeen years' work, and went to see his doctor, determined to regain what had been taken from him.

Old Dr. Berrenger led Crompton into his consultation room, gave him a comfortable chair and said, "Well lad, it's been a long time. How are you?"

"Terrible," said Crompton.

"What seems to be troubling you?"

"My personality," Crompton said.

"Ah," said the old doctor, staring keenly at Crompton's clerkly face. "Feels a bit cramped, eh?"

"Cramped is hardly the word," Crompton said primly. "I am a machine, a robot, a nothing—"

"Come now," Dr. Berrenger said. "Surely it isn't as bad as all that. Adjustment takes time—"

"I'm sick to death of myself," Crompton stated flatly. "I want to Reintegrate."

The doctor looked dubious.

"And," Crompton said, "I have passed my thirty-fifth birthday. Under federal law I am legally entitled to Reintegrate."

"You are," Dr. Berrenger said. "But as your friend as well as your doctor, Alistair, I would most strongly advise against it."

"Why?"

The old doctor sighed and made a steeple of his fingers. "It would be dangerous for you. Extremely dangerous. Perhaps fatal."

"But I would have a chance, wouldn't I?"

"A vanishingly small one."

"Then I demand my privilege of Reintegration."

The doctor sighed again, went to his file and took out a thick folder. "Well," he said, "let me review your case."

ALISTAIR CROMPTON, born to Lyle and Beth Crompton of Amundsenville, Marie Byrd Land, Antarctica. The father was a foreman at the Scott Plutonium mines, the mother was a part-time assembler at the little transistor factory. Both parents had a satisfactory record of mental and physical health. The infant Alistair showed every sign of an excellent post-natal adjustment.

During his first nine years, Alistair appeared normal in every respect, except for a certain moodiness; but children often are moody. Aside from that, Alistair was inquisitive, aggressive, affectionate and lighthearted, and well above the average in intelligence. In his tenth year the moodiness showed a marked increase. Some days the child would sit in his chair for hours, staring at nothing. At times he didn't respond to his own name.

(These 'spells' were not recognized as symptoms. They were passed off as the reveries of an imaginative child, to be outgrown in good time.)

Alistair's blank spells increased in number and intensity. He began to have temper tantrums, for which the local doctor prescribed tranquilizers. One day, at the age of ten years, seven months, Alistair struck a little girl for no ascertainable reason. When she cried, he attempted to strangle her. Finding this beyond his strength, he picked up a schoolbook and earnestly tried to smash in her skull. An adult managed to drag the kicking, screaming Alistair away. The girl suffered a brain concussion that hospitalized her for almost a year.

When questioned, Alistair maintained that he hadn't done it. Someone else must have done it. He would never hurt anyone, he insisted; and certainly not that little girl, of whom he was very fond. More questioning only succeeded in driving him into a stupor which lasted five days.

Even now there was time to save Alistair, if anyone had been able to recognize the early symptoms of virus schizophrenia. Even in the very young, this disease responded to prompt treatment.

In the temperate zones virus schizophrenia had been endemic for centuries, and occasionally broke out into epidemics such as the classic dancing-craze of the Middle Ages. Immunology still had not developed a vaccine to deal with the virus. Standard technique, therefore, called for immediate Massive Cleavage, while the schizoid personalities were still malleable; detection and retention of the dominant personality; and integration of the other personalities through a Mikkleton projector into the passive substance of a Durier body.

The Durier bodies were growth-androids, with an estimated forty-year adequacy. They were, of course, unviable. But the federal law allowed Personality Reintegration at the age of thirty-five. The personalities developed in the Durier bodies could, at the discretion of the dominant personality, be taken back into the original mind and body, with an excellent prognosis for Reintegration and complete fusion. . .

If the cleavage had been performed in time.

The general practitioner in small, isolated Amundsenville was a good man for frostbite, snow-blindness, cancer, involuntal melancholia, and other simple maladies of the Frozen South. He knew nothing about temperate zone diseases.

Alistair was put into the town infirmary for two weeks' observation.

During the first week he was moody, shy, and ill at ease, with momentary outbursts of his former lightheartedness. In his second week he began to show great affection toward his nurse, who declared he was a perfect darling. Under the influence of her soothing warmth, Alistair began to seem like his former self.

On his thirteenth day in the infirmary, Alistair slashed the nurse's face with a broken water tumbler, then made a desperate attempt to cut his own throat. He was hospitalized for his injuries, and sank into a catalepsy which the doctor thought was simple shock. Rest and quiet were prescribed; these were the worst possible things, under the circumstances.

After two weeks of stupor characterized by the waxy flexibility of catatonia, the disease had reached its height. Alistair's parents sent the child to the great Rivera Clinic in New York. There the case was immediately and accurately diagnosed as virus schizophrenia in an advanced stage.

Alistair, now eleven, had few reality-contacts with the world; not enough to provide a working basis for the specialists. He was now in an almost continual state of catatonia, his schizoid personalities irreconcilably hardened, his life lived in his own strange, unreachable twilight, among the nightmares which were his only companions. Massive Cleavage had little chance of success in so advanced a case. But without Cleavage, Alistair would be doomed to spend the rest of his life in an institution, never really conscious, never free from the surrealistic dungeons of his mind.

His parents chose what seemed the lesser evil, and signed the papers allowing the doctors to make a belated and desperate attempt at Cleavage.

Alistair received his operation at the age of eleven years, one month. Under deep syntho-hypnosis three separate personalities were evoked in him. The doctors talked to them and made their choice. Two personalities were projected into Durier bodies. The third personality, judged the most adequate of the three, was retained in the original corpus. All three personalities survived the trauma, and the operation was judged a limited success.

The neuro-hypnotist in charge, Dr. Vlacjcek, noted in his report that the three personalities, all inadequate, could not hope for a subsequent successful Reintegration at the legal age of thirty-five. The operation had come too late, and the personalities had lost their vital intermingling of traits and sympathies, their essential commonality. His report urged them to waive their Reintegration rights and live out their lives as best they could, each within his own personality.

The two Duriers were renamed and sent to foster homes on Mars and Venus. the doctors wished the best for them, but expected very little.

Alistair Crompton, the dominant personality in the original body, recovered from the operation; but a vital two-thirds of him was missing, gone with the schizoid personalities. Certain human attributes, emotions, capabilities, had been torn from him, never to be replaced or substituted.

Crompton grew up with only his individual characteristics: a sense of duty, neatness, tenacity, and caution. The inevitable exaggeration of these qualities turned him into a stereotype, a monolithic personality aware of its lacks and passionately desiring fulfillment, fusion, Reintegration.

"SO THAT'S how it is, Alistair," Dr. Berrenger said, closing the folder. "Dr. Vlacjcek most strongly advises against Reintegration. I concur, I'm sorry to say."

"It's my only chance," Crompton said.

"It's no chance at all," Dr. Berrenger told him. "You can take the personalities in, but you don't have the stability to hold them in check, to fuse them. Alistair, we saved you from virus schizophrenia, but the predilection is still there. Try to Reintegrate and you'll be walking straight into functional schizophrenia, and for good!"

"Others have succeeded," Crompton said.

"Of course. Many others. But invariably they received their operations in time, before the schizoid parts hardened."

"I'll have to take my chances," Crompton said. "I request the names and addresses of my Duriers."

"Didn't you hear me? Any attempt at Reintegration will mean insanity for you, or worse. As your doctor I cannot—"

"Give me the addresses," Crompton demanded coldly. "It is my privilege under the law. I feel that I have enough stability to hold the other personality components in line. When they've become thoroughly subordinate, fusion will follow. We'll be a single functioning unit. And I'll be an entire human being."

"You don't know what those other Cromptons are like," the doctor said. "You consider yourself inadequate? Alistair, you were the pick of the litter!"

"I don't care what they're like," Crompton said. "They're a part of me. The names and addresses, please."

Shaking his head wearily, the doctor wrote on a piece of paper and handed it to Crompton.

"Alistair, this has practically no chance of success. I beg of you to consider—"

"Thank you, Dr. Berrenger," Crompton said, bowed slightly, and left.

As soon as he was outside the office, Crompton's self-control began to crumble. He had not dared show Dr. Berrenger his uncertainties; the well-meaning old man would surely have talked him out of the attempted Reintegration. But now, with the names in his pocket and the responsibility entirely his own, anxiety began to sweep over him. He was overcome by an intense trembling fit. He managed to control it long enough to take a taxi back to his furnished room, where he could throw himself on the bed.

He lay for an hour, his body racked by anxiety spasms, clutching the headboard like a drowning man. Then the fit passed. Soon he was able to control his hands well enough to look at the paper the doctor had given him.

The first name on it was Edgar Loomis, of Elderberg, Mars. The other was Dan Stack, of East Marsh, Venus. That was all the paper said.

What were these embodied portions of his personality like? What humours, what stereotyped shapes had these truncated segments of himself taken?

The paper didn't say. He would have to go and find out.

He laid out a hand of solitaire and considered the risks. His early, unintegrated schizoid mind had shown a definite tendency toward homicidal mania. Would it be any better now in fusion, assuming that fusion was possible? Did he have the right to loose a potential monster upon the world? Was he wise in taking a step that carried the powerful threat of insanity, catatonia, death?

Crompton thought about it late into the night. At last his native caution won. He folded the paper carefully and put it into a drawer. As much as he desired Reintegration and wholeness, the dangers were simply too great. His present existence seemed preferable to insanity.

The next day he went out and found a job clerking for an ancient and respectable firm.

IMMEDIATELY his habits locked him in. Once again, with a robot's undeviating sureness, he reached his desk promptly at nine o'clock every morning, left at five and returned to his furnished room and his unappetizing health foods, played three games of solitaire, filled in a crossword puzzle and retired to his narrow bed. Again he saw a movie on Saturday nights, studied geometry on Sundays, and once a month bought, read and destroyed a magazine of salacious content.

His self-loathing increased. He started a stamp collection, discarded it, joined the All-Boroughs Happiness Club, walked out during its first stiff and embarrassed dance, tried to learn chess, gave it up. His limitations were not to be transcended in this fashion.

On all sides of him were the contradictions of humanity in their unending richness and variety. Spread before him was the feast of life, which he could not taste. A vision haunted him, of himself spending another twenty years in monotonous, unrelieved clerking; thirty years, forty years, without relief, without hope, transcended only by death.

Crompton spent six months thinking about this in his methodical fashion. Finally he decided that insanity was preferable to his present existence.

Therefore he resigned his job and once again withdrew his carefully hoarded savings. This time he bought a second-class ticket to Mars, to seek out Edgar Loomis of Elderberg.

ARMED WITH a thick volume of crossword puzzles, Crompton went to Idlewild Spaceport at the appointed time, endured the high-gravity climb to Station Three, changed for the Lockheed-Lackawanna shuttle to Exchange Point, caught the Hopover to Mars Station One, went through customs, immigration and health, and shuttled down to Port Newton. There he went through the three day acclimatization period, learned how to use the auxiliary stomach lung, stoically took booster shots, and finally received a travel visa good for all Mars. Armed with this, he caught a rápido to Elderberg, near the Martian South Pole.

The rápido crawled along the flat, monotonous Martian plains, past low gray shrubs struggling for existence in the cold, thin air, through swampy regions of dull green tundra. Crompton kept occupied with his crosswords. When the conductor announced they were crossing the Grand Canal he looked up in momentary interest. But it was merely a shallowly sloping bed left by a vanished river. The vegetation in its muddy bottom was dark green, almost black. Crompton returned to his puzzle.

They went through the Orange Desert, and stopped at little stations where bearded, wide-hatted immigrants jeeped in for their vitamin concentrates and the microfilm Sunday Times. And finally they reached the outskirts of Elderberg.

This town was the local focus for all South Polar mining and farming operations. It was also a resort for the rich, who came to wallow in its Longevity Baths, and for the sheer novelty of the trip. The region, warmed to 67 degrees Fahrenheit by volcanic action, was the warmest place on Mars. Inhabitants usually referred to it as the Tropics.

Crompton checked into a small motel, then joined the crowds of brightly dressed men and women who promenaded on Elderberg's quaint immovable sidewalks. He peered into the gambling palaces, gawked at the shops selling Genuine Artifacts of the Missing Martian Race, peered into the novel cocktail lounges and the glittering restaurants. He jumped with alarm when accosted by a painted young woman who invited him to Mama Teele's House, where low gravity made everything that was good better. He brushed off her and a dozen like her, and sat down in a little park to collect his thoughts.

Elderberg lay around him, replete in its pleasures, gaudy in its vices, a painted Jezebel whom Crompton rejected with a curl of his thin lips. And yet, behind his curled lips, averted eyes and nostrils indrawn in revulsion, a part of him longed for the humanity of vice as an alternative to his present bleak and sterile existence.

But sadly, Elderberg could corrupt him no better than New York. Perhaps Edgar Loomis would supply the missing ingredient.

Crompton began his search in the hotels, taking them in alphabetic order. Clerks at the first three said they had no idea where Loomis was; and if he should be found, there was a little matter of unpaid bills. The fourth thought that Loomis might have joined the big prospecting rush at Saddle Mountain. The fifth hotel, a recent establishment, had never heard of Loomis. At the sixth, a brightly overdressed young woman laughed with a slight hysteric edge when she heard Loomis' name; but she refused to give any information.

At the seventh hotel, the clerk told him that Edgar Loomis occupied Suite 314. He was not in at present, but could probably be found in the Red Planet Saloon.

Crompton asked directions. Then, his heart beating rapidly, he made his way into the older section of Elderberg.

Here the hotels were stained and weathered, the paints worn, the plastics pitted by the seasonal dust storms. Here the gambling halls were crowded close together, and the dance halls blared their mirth at midday and midnight. Here the budget tourists clustered with their cameras and recorders, in search of local color, hoping to encounter at a safe yet photographable distance the wicked glamour that led zealous promoters to call Elderberg the Nineveh of Three Planets. And here were the safari shops, outfitting parties for the famed descent into Xanadu Caverns or the long sandcar drive to Devil's Twist. Here also was the infamous Dream Shop, selling every narcotic known to man, still in business despite legislative efforts to shut it down. And here the sidewalk hawkers sold bits of alleged Martian dry-stone carving, or anything else you might desire.

Crompton found the Red Planet Saloon, entered, and waited until he could see through the dense clouds of tobacco and kif. He looked at the tourists in their gaily colored shirts standing at the long bar, stared at the quick-talking guides and the dour rock miners. He looked at the gambling tables with their chattering women, and their men with the prized faint orange Martian tan that takes, it is said, a month to acquire.

Then, unmistakably, he saw Loomis.

Loomis was at the faro table, in company with a buxom blonde woman who, at a first glance, looked thirty, at a second glance forty, and after a long careful look perhaps forty-five. She was gambling ardently, and Loomis was watching her with an amused smile.

He was tall and slender. His manner of dress was best expressed by the crossword puzzle word nappy. He had mouse-brown hair sleeked back on a narrow skull. A woman not too choosy might have called him handsome.

He didn't resemble Crompton; but there was an affinity, a pull, an instant sense of rapport that all Cleavage members possess. Mind called to mind, the parts calling for the whole, with an almost telepathic intensity. And Loomis, sensing it, raised his head and stared full at Crompton.

Crompton began walking toward him, Loomis whispered to the blonde, left the faro table and met Crompton in the middle of the floor.

"Who are you?" Loomis asked.

"Alistair Crompton. You're Loomis? I have the original body, and—do you know what I'm talking about?"

"Yes, of course," Loomis said. "I'd been wondering if you'd show up. Hmm." He looked Crompton up and down, and didn't seem too pleased with

what he saw.

"All right," Loomis said, "we'll go up to my suite and have a talk. Might as well get that over with now."

He looked at Crompton again, with undisguised distaste, and led him out of the saloon.

Loomis' suite was a wonder and a revelation. Crompton almost stumbled as his feet sank into the deep-piled oriental rug. The light in the room was dim and golden, and a constant succession of faint and disturbing shadows writhed and twisted across the walls, taking on human shapes, coiling and closing with each other, transmuting into animals and the blotchy forms of children's nightmares, and disappearing into the mosaic ceiling. Crompton had heard of shadow songs, but had never before witnessed one.

Loomis said, "It's playing a rather fragile little piece called 'Descent to Kartherum.' How do you like it?"

"It's—impressive," Crompton said. "It must have been terribly expensive."

"I daresay," Loomis said carelessly. "It was a gift. Won't you sit down?"

Crompton settled into a deep armchair that conformed to his contours and began, very gently, to massage his back.

"Something to drink?" Loomis asked.

Crompton nodded dumbly. Now he noticed the perfumes in the air, a complex and shifting mixture of spice and sweetness, with the barest hint of putrefaction.

"That smell—"

"It takes getting used to," Loomis said. "It's an olfactory sonata composed as an accompaniment to the shadow song. But I'll turn it off."

He did so, and turned on something else. Crompton heard a melody that seemed to originate in his own head. The tune was slow and sensuous, and unbearably poignant; and it seemed to Crompton that he had heard it somewhere before, in another time and place.

"It's called 'Déjà Vu'," Loomis said. "Direct aural transmission technique. Pleasant little thing, isn't it?"

Crompton knew that Loomis was trying to impress him. And he was impressed. As Loomis poured drinks, Crompton looked around the room, at the sculptures, drapes, furniture and gadgets; his clerkly mind made an estimate of cost, added transportation charges and taxes from Terra, and totaled the result.

With dismay he realized that in this room alone Loomis had goods worth more than Crompton could earn in three and one-quarter lifetimes of clerking.

Loomis handed Crompton a glass. "It's mead," he said. "Quite the vogue in Elderberg this season. Tell me what you think of it."

Crompton sipped the honeyed beverage. "Delicious," he said. "Costly, I suppose."

"Quite. But then, the best is only barely sufficient, don't you think?"

Crompton didn't answer. He stared hard at Loomis, and saw the signs of a decaying Durier body. Carefully he observed the neat, handsome features, the Martian tan, the smooth, mousy brown hair, the careless elegance of the clothes, the faint crows' feet in the corners of the eyes, the sunken cheeks on which was a trace of cosmetics. He observed Loomis' habitual self-indulgent smile, the disdainful twist of his lips, the way his nervous fingers stroked a piece of brocade, the complacent slump of his body against the exquisite furniture.

Here, he realized, was the stereotype of the sensualist, the man who lived only for pleasures and slothful ease. Here was an embodiment of the Sanguine Humour of Fire, caused by too much hot blood, tending to make a man unduly mirthful and over-fond of fleshy gratifications. And Loomis, like himself, was a monolithic, centimeter-thin personality, his desires completely predictable, his fears obvious to anyone.

In Loomis resided all Crompton's potentialities for pleasure, ripped from him and set up as an entity in itself. Loomis, the pure pleasure principle, vitally necessary to the Crompton mind-body.

"How do you make a living?" Crompton asked bluntly.

"Through the performance of services, for which I am paid," Loomis answered, smiling.

"To put that in plainer English," Crompton said, "you are a leech and a parasite. You feast on the idle rich who flock to Elderberg."

"You would see it that way of course, my hard-working puritanical brother," Loomis said, lighting a pale ivory cigarette. "But my own view is somewhat different. Consider. Everything today is biased toward the poor, as though there were some special virtue in improvidence. Yet the rich have their needs and necessities, too! These needs are unlike the needs of the poor, but no less urgent. The poor require food, shelter, medical attention. The governments provide these admirably. But what about the needs of the rich? People laugh at the idea of a rich man having problems; but does mere possession of credit exclude him from having problems? It does not! Quite the contrary, wealth increases need and sharpens necessity, often leaving a rich man in a more truly necessitous condition than his poor brother."

"In that case, why doesn't he give up his wealth?" Crompton asked.

"Why doesn't a poor man give up his poverty?" Loomis asked in return. "No, it can't be done, we must accept the conditions that life has imposed upon us. The burden of the rich is heavy; still, they must bear it, and seek aid where they can.

"The rich need sympathy; and I am very sympathetic. The rich need people around them who can truly enjoy luxury, and teach them how to enjoy it; and few, I think, enjoy and appreciate the luxuries of the rich as well as I do. And their women, Crompton! They have their needs—urgent, pressing needs, which their husbands frequently cannot fulfill due to the tensions under which they live. These women cannot entrust themselves to any lout from the streets. They are nervous, highly bred, suspicious, these women, and highly suggestible. They need nuance and subtlety. They need the attentions of a man of soaring imagination, yet possessed of an exquisite sensibility. Such men are all too rare in this humdrum world. My talents happen to lie in that particular direction. Therefore I exercise there. And of course I expect recompense just like any working man."

Loomis leaned back with a smile. Crompton stared at him with a certain horror. He found it difficult to believe that this corrupt, self-satisfied seducer, this creature with the morals of a mink was part of himself. But he was, and necessary to the fusion.

"Well," Crompton said, "your views are your business. I'm the basic Crompton personality in the original Crompton body. I've come to Reintegrate you."

"Not interested," Loomis said.

"You mean that you won't?"

"Exactly."

"You don't seem to realize," Crompton said, "that you are incomplete, unfinished. You must have the same drive toward self-realization that I have. And it's possible only through Reintegration."

"Perfectly true," Loomis said.

"Then—"

"No," Loomis said. "I have an urge toward self-completion. But I have a much stronger urge to go on living exactly as I am living, in a manner I find eminently satisfactory. Luxury has its compensations, you know."

"Perhaps you've forgotten," Crompton said, "that you are living in a Durier body which has an estimated competence of forty years. If you don't Reintegrate, you have a maximum of five more years of life. A maximum, mind you. Durier bodies have broken down in less."

"That's true," Loomis said, frowning slightly.

"Reintegration won't be so bad," Crompton said, in what he hoped was a winning manner. "Your pleasure impulse won't be lost. It'll merely be put into better proportion."

Loomis thought hard, drawing on his pale ivory cigarette. Then he looked Crompton full in the face and said, "No."

"But your future—"

"I'm simply not the sort of person who can worry about the future," Loomis said, with a smug smile. "It's enough for me simply to live through each day, savoring it to the fullest. Five years from now—why, who knows what will happen five years from now? Five years is an eternity! Something will probably turn up."

Crompton resisted a strong desire to throttle some sense into Loomis. Of course the sensualist lived only in the ever-present now, giving no thought to a distant and uncertain future. Five years' time was unthinkable to the now-centered Loomis. He should have thought of that.

Keeping his voice calm, Crompton said, "Nothing will turn up. In five years—five short years—you will die."

Loomis shrugged. "It's my policy never to worry past Thursday. Tell you what, old man. I'll look you up in three or four years and we'll discuss it then."

"It'll never work," Crompton told him. "You'll be on Mars, I'll be on Earth, and our other component will be on Venus. We'll never get together in time. Besides, you won't even remember."

"We'll see, we'll see," Loomis said, glancing at his watch. "And now, if you don't mind, I'm expecting a visitor soon who would doubtless prefer—"

Crompton arose. "If you change your mind, I'm staying at the Blue Moon Motel. I'll just be here for another day or two."

"Have a pleasant stay," Loomis said. "Be sure to see the Xanadu Caverns. Fabulous sight!"

Thoroughly numbed, Crompton left Loomis' ornate suite and returned to his motel.

That evening Crompton ate at a snack counter, consuming a Marsburger and a Red Malted. At a newsstand he found a book of acrostics. He returned to his room, filled in three puzzles, and went to sleep.

The next day he tried to decide what to do. There seemed to be no way of convincing Loomis. Should he go to Venus and find Dan Stack, the other missing portion of his personality? No, that would be worse than useless. Even if Stack were willing to Reintegrate, they would still be missing a vital third of themselves—Loomis, the all-important pleasure principle. Two-thirds would crave completion more passionately than one-third, and be in more desperate straits without it. And Loomis would not be convinced.

Under the circumstances, his only course was to return to Earth un-Reintegrated, and make whatever adjustments he could. There was, after all, a certain joy in hard, dedicated work, a certain pleasure in steadiness, circumspection, dependability. The frugal virtues were not to be overlooked.

But he found it difficult to convince himself. And with a heavy heart he telephoned Elderberg Depot and made a reservation on the evening rápido to Port Newton.

AS HE was packing, an hour before the rápido left, his door was suddenly flung open. Edgar Loomis stepped in, looked quickly around, shut the door behind him and locked it.

"I've changed my mind," Loomis said. "I've decided to Reintegrate."

Crompton's first feeling of joy was stifled in a wave of suspicion.

"What made you change your mind?" he asked.

"Does it really matter?" Loomis said. "Can't we—"

"I want to know why," Crompton said.

"Well it's a little difficult to explain. You see, I had just—"

There was a heavy rapping on the door. Loomis turned pale under his orange tan. "Please!" he said.

"Tell me," Crompton said implacably.

Beads of sweat appeared on Loomis' forehead. "Just one of those things," he said quickly. "Sometimes husbands don't appreciate one's little attentions to their wives. Even the rich can be shockingly bourgeois at times. Husbands are one of the hazards of my trade. So once or twice a year I find it expedient to take a little vacation in a cave I've furnished at All Diamond Mountain. It's really very comfortable, though the food is necessarily plain. In a few weeks the whole thing blows over."

The knocking at the door grew louder. A bass voice shouted, "I know you're in there, Loomis! Come out or I'll break down this damned door and wrap it around your slimy neck!"

Loomis' hands were trembling uncontrollably. "I have a dread of physical violence," he said. "Couldn't we simply Reintegrate, then I'll explain—"

"I want to know why you didn't go to your cave this time," Crompton said.

They heard the sound of a body slamming heavily against the door. Loomis said shrilly, "It was all your fault, Crompton! Your coming here unsettled me. I lost my fine sense of timing, my sixth sense of danger. Damn it, Crompton, I didn't get away in time! Me, caught in the act! I barely escaped, with that fantastic muscular neanderthal idiot of a *nouveau-riche* husband following me around town, searching the saloons and hotels, threatening to break my limbs. I didn't have enough ready cash to hire a sandcar, and there was no time to pawn my jewelry. And the police just grinned and refused to protect me! Crompton, please!"

The door bulged under repeated blows, and the lock began to give. Crompton turned to his personality component, grateful that Loomis' essential inadequacy had shown up in time.

"Come," Crompton said, "let's Reintegrate."

The two men stared hard into each other's eyes, parts calling for the whole, potential increasing to bridge the gap. Then Loomis gasped and his Durier body collapsed, folding in on itself like a rag doll. At the same moment, Crompton's knees buckled as though a weight had landed on his shoulders.

The lock gave way and the door slammed open. A short, red-eyed, thickly constructed, black-haired man came into the room.

"*Where is he?*" the man shouted.

Crompton pointed to Loomis' body stretched on the floor. "Heart attack," he said.

"Oh," said the black-haired man, caught between rage and shock. "Oh. Well. . . Oh."

"I'm quite sure be deserved it," Crompton said coldly, picked up his suitcase and marched out to catch the evening rápido.

The long ride across the Martian plains came as a much needed breathing spell. It gave Crompton and Loomis a chance to make a true acquaintance, and to settle certain basic problems which two minds in one body are bound to encounter.

There was no question of ascendancy. Crompton was the basic personality, and for thirty-five years had been resident in the Crompton mind body. Under normal circumstances Loomis could not take over, and had no desire to do so. Loomis accepted his passive role gracefully, and resigned himself, with typical good will, to the status of commentator, advisor, and general well-wisher.

But there was no Reintegration. Crompton and Loomis existed in the one mind like planet and moon, independent but closely related entities, cautiously testing each other out, unwilling and unable to relinquish personal autonomy. A certain amount of seepage was taking place, of course; but the fusion of a single stable personality out of its discrete elements could not take place until Dan Stack, the third component, had entered.

And even then, Crompton reminded the optimistic Loomis, Reintegration might not follow. Assuming for a moment that Stack was willing to enter (which he might not be), the three schizoid parts might resist fusion or find it impossible to achieve; in which case their conflicts within one body would rapidly bring on a state of insanity.

"Why worry about it, old man?" Loomis asked.

"Because it's something that must be worried about," Crompton said. "Even if the three of us achieve Reintegration, the resulting mind might not be stable. Psychotic elements might predominate, and then—"

"We'll simply have to take it as it comes," Loomis said. "Day by day, bit by bit."

Crompton agreed. Loomis, the good-natured, easy-going sybaritic side of his personality was already having an effect upon him. With an effort he forced himself to stop worrying. Soon he was able to do a crossword puzzle, while Loomis toyed with the opening lines of a villanelle.

THE RÁPIDO reached Port Newton, and Crompton shuttled to Mars Station 1. He went through customs, emigration and health, and caught the Hopover to Exchange Point. There he had to wait fifteen days for a Venus-bound ship. The brisk young ticket clerk spoke about the problems of "opposition" and "economical orbits", but neither Crompton nor Loomis understood what he was talking about.

The delay proved valuable. Loomis was able to provide an acceptable signature to a note requesting a friend in Elderberg to convert his properties into cash, pay his bills, take a healthy broker's fee, and send his heir, Crompton, the remainder. The transactions were completed on the eleventh day and provided Crompton with nearly three thousand badly needed dollars.

At last the Venus ship lifted. Crompton set to work learning Basic Yggdra, root language of the Venusian aboriginals. Loomis, for the first time in his life, tried to work too, putting aside his villanelle and tackling the complexities of Yggdra. He quickly became bored with its elaborate conjugations and declensions, but persisted to the best of his ability, and marvelled at the studious, hard-working Crompton.

In return, Crompton made a few tentative advances into the appreciation of beauty. Aided and instructed by Loomis he attended the ship's concerts, looked at the paintings in the Main Salon, and stared long and earnestly at the brilliant glowing stars from the ship's observation port. It all seemed a considerable waste of time, but he persevered.

Their cooperation was threatened on the tenth day out, by the wife of a second-generation Venusian planter whom Crompton met in the observation port. She had been on Mars for a tuberculosis cure, and now was going home.

She was small, bright-eyed and vivacious, with a slender figure and glistening black hair. She was bored by the long passage through space.

They went to the ship's lounge. After four Martinis, Crompton was able to relax and let Loomis come to the fore; which he did with a will. Loomis danced with her to the ship's phonograph; then generously receded, leaving Crompton in command, nervous, flushed, tanglefooted and enormously pleased. And it was Crompton who led her back to the table, Crompton who made small talk with her, and Crompton who touched her hand, while the complacent Loomis looked on.

At nearly two AM., ship's time, the girl left, after pointedly mentioning her room number. Crompton reeled deliriously back to his own room on B deck, and collapsed happily on the bed.

"Well?" Loomis asked.

"Well what?"

"Let's go. The invitation was clear enough."

"There was no invitation," Crompton said, puzzled.

"She mentioned her room number," Loomis pointed out. "That, together with the other events of the evening, constitutes an unmistakable invitation—almost a command."

"I can't believe it!" Crompton said.

"Take my word," Loomis told him. "I have some slight experience in these matters. The invitation is clear, the course is open. Onward!"

"No, no," Crompton said. "I wouldn't—I mean I don't—I couldn't—"

"Lack of experience is no excuse," Loomis said firmly. "Nature is exceedingly generous in helping one to discover her ways. Consider also the fact that beavers, racoons, wolves, tigers, mice, and other creatures without a hundredth of your intelligence manage to perform in exemplary fashion what you find so baffling. Surely you won't let a mouse outdo you!"

Crompton got to his feet, wiped his glowing forehead, and took two tentative steps toward the door. Then he wheeled and sat down on the bed.

"Absolutely not," he said firmly.

"But why?"

"It would be unethical. The young lady is married."

"Marriage," Loomis said patiently, "is a man-made institution. But before marriage there were men and women, and certain modes between them. Natural laws always take precedence over human legislation."

"It's immoral," Crompton said, without much vigor.

"Not at all," Loomis assured him. "You are unmarried, so no possible blame can attach to you for your actions. The young lady is married. That's her responsibility. But remember, she is a human being capable of making her own decisions, not some mere chattel of her husband. Her decision has been made, and we must respect her integrity in the matter; to do otherwise would be insulting. Finally, there is the husband. He will know nothing of this, and therefore will not be injured by it. In fact, he will gain. For his wife, in recompense, will be unusually pleasant to him. He will assume that this is because of his forceful personality, and his ego will be bolstered thereby. So you see, Crompton, everyone will gain, and no one will lose."

"Sheer sophistry," Crompton said, standing up again and moving toward the door.

"Atta boy," Loomis said.

Crompton grinned idiotically and opened the door. Then a thought struck him and he slammed the door shut and lay down on the bed.

"Absolutely not," Crompton said.

"What's the matter now?"

"The reasons you gave me," Crompton said, "may or may not be sound. I don't have enough experience in the world to know. But one thing I do know. *I will not engage in anything of this sort while you're watching!*"

"But—damn it, I'm you! You're me! We're two parts of one personality!"

"Not yet we aren't," Crompton said. "We exist now as schizoid parts, two people in one body. Later, after Reintegration has taken place . . . But under the present circumstances, my sense of decency forbids me from doing what you suggest. It's unthinkable! I don't wish to discuss the matter any further."

At that, Loomis lost his temper. Thwarted from the fundamental expression of his own personality, he raved and shouted and called Crompton many hard names, the least of which was "yellow-livered little coward." His anger set up reverberations in Crompton's mind, and echoed throughout their entire shared organism. The schism lines between the two personalities deepened; new fissures appeared, and the break threatened to isolate the two minds in true Jekyll-and-Hyde fashion.

Crompton's dominant personality carried him past that. But, in a furious rage at Loomis, his mind began to produce antidots. Those still not fully understood little entities, like leukocytes in the bloodstream, had the task of expunging pain and walling off the sore spot in the mind.

Loomis shied back in fright as the antidots began building their *cordon sanitaire* around him, crowding him, folding him back on himself, walling him off.

"Crompton! Please!"

Loomis was in danger of being completely and irrevocably sealed off, lost forever in a black corner of the Crompton mind. And lost with him would be any chance for Reintegration. But Crompton managed to regain his stability in time. The flow of antidots stopped; the wall dissolved, and Loomis shakily regained his position.

FOR A WHILE they weren't on speaking terms. Loomis sulked and brooded for an entire day, and swore he would never forgive Crompton's brutality. But above all he was a sensualist, living forever in the moment, forgetful of the past, incapable of worry about the future. His resentments passed quickly, leaving him serene and amused as always.

Crompton was not so forgetful; but he recognized his responsibilities as the dominant part of the personality. He worked to maintain the cooperation, and the two personalities were soon operating at their fullest potential sympathy.

By mutual consent they avoided the company of the young lady. The rest of the trip passed quickly, and at last Venus was reached.

THEY WERE set down in Satellite 3, where they passed through customs, immigration and health. They received shots for Creeping Fever, Venus Plague, Knight's Disease, and Big Itch. They were given powders in case of Swamp Decay, and pills to ward off Bluefoot. Finally they were permitted to take the shuttle down to the mainland embarkation depot of Port New Haarlem.

This city, on the western shore of the sluggish Inland Zee, was situated in Venus' temperate zone. Still they were uncomfortably warm after the chill, invigorating climate of Mars. Here they saw their first Venusian aboriginals outside a circus; saw hundreds of them, in fact. The natives averaged five feet in height, and their scaly armored hides showed their remote lizard ancestry. Along the sidewalks they walked erect; but often, to avoid crowds, they moved across the vertical sides of buildings, clinging with the sucker disks on their hands, feet, knees and forearms.

Many buildings had barbed wire to protect their windows; for these detribalized natives were reputed to be thieves, and their only sport was assassination.

Crompton spent a day in the city, then took a helicopter to East Marsh, the last known address of Dan Stack. The ride was a monotonous whirring and flapping through dense cloud banks which blocked all view of the surface. The search-radar pinged sharply, hunting for the shifting inversion zones where the dreaded Venusian tornado, the *zicre*, sometimes burst into violent life. But the winds were gentle on this trip, and Crompton slept most of the way.

East Marsh was a busy shipping port on a tributary of the Inland Zee. Here Crompton found Stack's foster-parents, a couple now in their eighties and showing signs of senility.

They told him that Dan was a strapping big boy, a mite hasty sometimes, but always well-meaning. They assured him that the affair of the Morrison girl wasn't true. Dan must have been falsely accused. Dan would never do such a thing to a poor defenceless girl.

"Where can I find Dan?" Crompton asked.

"Ah," said the old man, blinking his watery eyes, "didn't you know Dan left here? Ten, maybe fifteen years ago it was."

"East Marsh was too dull for him," the old lady said, with a touch of venom. "So he borrowed our little nest egg and left in the middle of the night, while we were sleeping."

"Didn't want to bother us," the old man quickly explained. "Wanted to seek his fortune, Dan did. And I wouldn't be surprised but what he found it. Had the stuff of a real man, Dan had."

"Where did he go?" Crompton asked.

"Couldn't rightly say," the old man said. "He never wrote us. Never much of a hand with words, our Dan. But Billy. Davis saw him in Ou-Barkar that time he drove his semi there with a load of potatoes."

"When was that?"

"Five, maybe six years ago," the old lady said. "That's the last we ever heard of Dan. Venus is a big place, Mister."

Crompton thanked the old couple. He tried to locate Billy Davis for further information, but found that he was working as third mate of a pocket freighter. The ship had sailed a month ago, and was making stops at all the sleepy little ports on the Southern Inland Zee.

"Well," Crompton said, "there's only one thing to do. We'll have to go to Ou-Barkar."

"I suppose so," Loomis said. "But frankly, old man, I'm beginning to wonder about this Stack fellow."

"I am too," Crompton admitted. "But he's part of us, and we need him in the Reintegration."

"I guess we do," Loomis said. "Lead on, oh Elder Brother."

Crompton led on. He caught a helicopter to Depotsville, and a bus to St. Denis. Here he was able to hitch a ride in a semi bound across the marshes to Ou-Barkar with a load of insecticides. The driver was glad of company across the desolate Wetlands.

During that fourteen hour trip Crompton learned much about Venus. The vast, warm, watery world was Earth's new frontier, the driver told him. Mars was a dead tourist's curio, but Venus had real possibilities. To Venus came the pioneering types, spiritual and sometimes actual descendants of the American frontiersmen, Boer farmers, Israeli kibbutzniks and Australian ranchers. Stubbornly they fought for a foothold on the fertile steppes, the ore-rich mountains, and by the shores of the warm seas. They fought with the Stone Age aboriginals, the lizard-evolved Ais. Their great victories at Satan's Pass, Squareface, Albertsville and Double Tongue, and their defeats at Slow River and Blue Falls were already a part of human history, fit to stand beside Chancellorsville, the Little Big Horn, and Dienbienphu. And the wars were not over yet. On Venus, the driver told them, a world was still to be won.

Crompton listened, and thought he might like to be a part of all this. Loomis was frankly bored by the whole matter, and disgusted with the rank swamp odors.

OU-BARKAR was a cluster of plantations deep in the interior of White Cloud Continent. Fifty Terrans supervised the work of two thousand aboriginals, who planted, tended and harvested the li-trees that grew only in that sector. The li fruit, gathered twice a year, was the basis of elispace, a condiment now considered indispensable in Terran cooking.

Crompton met the foreman, a huge, red-faced man named Haaris, who wore a revolver on his hip and a blacksnake whip coiled neatly around his waist.

"Dan Stack?" the foreman said. "Sure, Stack worked here nearly a year. Then he left, with a boot in the rear to help him on his way."

"Do you mind telling me why?" Crompton asked.

"Don't mind at all," the foreman said. "But let's do it over a drink."

He led Crompton to Ou-Barkar's single saloon. There, over a glass of local corn whiskey, Haaris talked about Dan Stack.

"He came up here from East Marsh. I believe he'd had some trouble with a girl down there—kicked in her teeth or something. But that's no concern of mine. Most of us here aren't exactly gentle types, and I guess the cities are damned well rid of us. I put Stack to work overseeing fifty Ais on a hundred-acre li field. He did damned well at first."

The foreman downed his drink. Crompton ordered another and paid for it.

"I told him," Haaris said, "that he'd have to drive his boys to get anything out of them. We use mostly Chipetzi tribesmen, and they're a sullen, treacherous bunch, though husky. Their chief rent us workers on a twenty-year contract, in exchange for guns. Then they try to pick us off with the guns, but that's another matter. We handle one thing at a time."

"A twenty year contract?" Crompton asked. "Then the Ais are practically slave laborers?"

"Right," the foreman said decisively. "Some of the owners try to pretty it up, call it temporary indenture or feudal-transition economy. But it's slavery, and why not call it that? It's the only way we'll ever civilize these people. Stack understood that. Big hefty fellow he was, and handy with a whip. I thought he'd do all right."

"And?" Crompton prompted, ordering another drink for the foreman.

"At first he was fine," Haaris said. "Laid on with the blacksnake, got out his quota and then some. But he hadn't any sense of moderation. Started killing his boys with the whip, and replacements cost money. I told him to take it a little easier. He didn't. One day his Chipetzi ganged up on him and he had to gun down about eight before they backed off. I had a heart-to-heart talk with him. Told him the idea was to get work out, not kill Ais. We expect to lose a certain percentage, of course. But Stack was pushing it too far, and cutting down the profit."

The foreman sighed and lighted a cigarette. "Stack just liked using that whip too much. Lots of the boys do, but Stack had no sense of moderation. His Chipetzi ganged up again and he had to kill about a dozen of them. But he lost a hand in the fight. His whip hand. I think a Chipetzi chewed it off."

"I put him to work in the drying sheds but he got into another fight and killed four Ais. That was too much. Those workers cost money, and we can't have some hotheaded idiot killing them off every time he gets sore. I gave Stack his pay and told him to get the hell out."

"Did he say where he was going?" Crompton asked.

"He said we didn't realize that the Ais had to be wiped out to make room for Terrans. Said he was going to join the Vigilantes. They're a sort of roving army that keeps the unpacified tribes in check."

Crompton thanked the foreman and asked the location of the Vigilantes' headquarters.

"Right now they're encamped on the left bank of the Rainmaker River," Haaris said. "They're trying to make terms with the Seriid. You want to find Stack pretty bad, huh?"

"He's my brother," Crompton said, with a faint sinking sensation in his stomach.

The foreman looked at him steadily. "Well," he said after a while, "kin's kin. But your brother's about the worst example of a human being I've seen, and I've seen some. Better leave him alone."

"I have to find him," Crompton said.

Haaris shrugged fatalistically. "It's a long trek to Rainmaker River. I can sell you pack mules and provisions, and I'll rent you a native kid for a guide. You'll be going through pacified territory, so you should reach the Vigilantes all right. I think the territory's still pacified."

THAT NIGHT, Loomis urged Crompton to abandon the search. Stack was obviously a thief and murderer. What was the sense of taking him into the combination?

Crompton felt that the case wasn't as simple as that. For one thing, the stories about Stack might have been exaggerated. But even if they were true, it simply meant that Stack was another stereotype, an inadequate and monolithic personality extended past all normal bounds, as were Crompton and Loomis. Within the combination, in fusion, Stack would be modified. He would supply the necessary measure of aggression, the toughness and survival fitness that both Crompton and Loomis lacked.

Loomis didn't think so, but agreed to suspend judgment until they actually met their missing component.

In the morning Crompton purchased equipment and mules at an exorbitant price, and the following day he set out at dawn, led by a Chipetzi youngster named Rekki.

Crompton followed the guide through virgin forest into the Thompson mountains, up razorback ridges, across cloud-covered peaks into narrow granite passes where the wind screamed like the tormented dead; then down, into the dense and steamy jungle on the other side. Loomis, appalled by the hardships of the march, retreated into a corner of himself and emerged only in the evenings when the campfire was lit and the hammock slung. Crompton, with set jaw and bloodshot eyes, stumbled through the burning days, bearing the full sensory impact of the journey and wondering how long his strength would last.

On the eighteenth day they reached the banks of a shallow muddy stream. This, Rekki said, was the Rainmaker River. Two miles further on they found the Vigilante camp.

The Vigilante commander, Colonel Prentice, was a tall, spare, gray-eyed man who showed the marks of a recent wasting fever. He remembered Stack very well.

"Yes, he was with us for a while. I was uncertain about accepting him. His reputation, for one thing. And a one-handed man . . . But he'd trained his left hand to fire a gun better than most do with their right, and he had a bronze fitting over his right stump. Made it himself, and it was grooved to hold a machete. No lack of guts, I'll tell you that. He was with us almost two years. Then I cashiered him."

"Why?" Crompton asked.

The commander sighed unhappily. "Contrary to popular belief, we Vigilantes are not a freebooting army of conquest. We are not here to decimate and destroy the natives. We are not here to annex new territories upon the slightest pretext. We are here to enforce treaties entered into in good faith by Ais and settlers, to prevent raiding by Ais and Terrans alike, and, in general, to keep the peace. Stack had difficulty getting that through his thick skull."

Some expression must have passed across Crompton's face, for the commander nodded sympathetically.

"You know what he's like, eh? Then you can imagine what happened. I didn't want to lose him. He was a tough and able soldier, skilled in forest and mountain lore, perfectly at home in the jungle. The Border Patrol is thinly spread, and we need every man we can get. Stack was valuable. I told the sergeants to keep him in line and allow no brutalizing of the natives. For a while it worked. Stack was trying hard. He was learning our rules, our code, our way of doing things. His record was unimpeachable. Then came the Shadow Peak incident, which I suppose you've heard about."

"I'm afraid I haven't," Crompton said.

"Really? I thought everyone on Venus had. Well, the situation was this. Stack's patrol had rounded up nearly a hundred Ais of an outlaw tribe that had been causing us some trouble. They were being conducted to the special reservation at Shadow Peak. On the march there was a little trouble, a scuffle. One of the Ais had a knife, and he slashed Stack across the right wrist.

"I suppose losing one hand made him especially sensitive to the possible loss of another. The wound was superficial, but Stack berserked. He killed the native with a riot gun, then turned it on the rest of them. A lieutenant had to bludgeon him into unconsciousness before he could be stopped. The damage to Terran-Ais relations was immeasurable. I couldn't have a man like that in my outfit. He needs a psychiatrist. I cashiered him."

"Where is he now?" Crompton asked.

"Just what is your interest in the man?" the commander asked bluntly.

"He's my half-brother."

"I see. Well, I heard that Stack drifted to Port New Haarlem, and worked for a while on the docks. He teamed up with a chap named Barton Finch. Both were jailed for drunk and disorderly conduct, got out and drifted back to the White Cloud frontier. Now he and Finch own a little trading store up near

Blood Delta.”

Crompton rubbed his forehead wearily and said, “How do I get there?”

“By canoe,” the commander said. “You go down the Rainmaker River to where it forks. The left-hand stream is Blood River. It’s navigable all the way to Blood Delta. But I would not advise the trip.

“For one thing, it’s extremely hazardous. For another, it would be useless. There’s nothing you can do for Stack. He’s a bred-in-the-bone killer. He’s better off alone in a frontier town where he can’t do much damage.”

“I must go to him,” Crompton said, his throat suddenly dry.

“There’s no law against it,” the commander said, with the air of a man who has done his duty.

CROMPTON FOUND that Blood Delta was man’s furthest frontier on Venus. It lay in the midst of hostile Grel and Tengtzi tribesmen, with whom a precarious peace was maintained, and an incessant guerilla war was ignored. There was great wealth to be gained in the Delta country. The natives brought in fist-sized diamonds and rubies, sacks of the rarest spices, and an occasional flute or carving from the lost city of Alteirne. They traded these things for guns and ammunition, which they used enthusiastically on the traders and on each other. There was wealth to be found in the Delta, and sudden death, and slow, painful, lingering death as well. The Blood River, which wound slowly into the heart of the Delta country, had its own special hazards, which usually took a fifty percent toll of travellers upon it.

Crompton resolutely shut his mind to all common sense. His component, Stack, lay just ahead of him. The end was in sight, and Crompton was determined to reach it. So he bought a canoe and hired four native paddlers, purchased supplies, guns, ammunition, and arranged for a dawn departure.

But the night before he planned to go, Loomis revolted.

THEY WERE in a small tent which the commander had put aside for Crompton’s use. By a smoking kerosene lamp Crompton was stuffing cartridges into a bandolier, his attention fixed on the immediate task and unwilling to look elsewhere.

Loomis said, “Now listen to me. I’ve recognized you as the dominant personality. I’ve made no attempt to take over the body. I’ve been in good spirits, and I’ve kept you in good spirits while we tramped halfway around Venus. Isn’t that true?”

“Yes it is,” Crompton said, reluctantly putting down the bandolier.

“I’ve done the best I could, but this is too much. I want Reintegration, but not with a homicidal maniac. Don’t talk to me about monolithic personalities. Stack’s homicidal, and I want nothing to do with him.”

“He’s a part of us,” Crompton said.

“So what? Listen to yourself, Crompton! You’re supposed to be the component most in touch with reality. And you’re completely obsessed, planning on sending us into sure death on that river.”

“We’ll get through all right,” Crompton said, with no conviction.

“Will we?” Loomis asked. “Have you listened to the stories about Blood River? And even if we do make it, what will we find at the Delta? A homicidal maniac! He’ll shatter us, Crompton!”

Crompton was unable to find an adequate answer. As their search had progressed he had grown more and more horrified at the unfolding personality of Stack, and more and more obsessed with the need to find him. Loomis had never lived with the driving need for Reintegration; he had come in because of external problems, not internal needs. But Crompton had been compelled all his life by the passion for humanness, completion, transcendence. Without Stack, fusion was impossible. With him there was a chance, no matter how small.

“We’re going on,” Crompton said.

“Alistair, please! You and I get along all right. We can do fine without Stack. Let’s go back to Mars or Earth.”

Crompton shook his head. Already he could feel the deep and irreconcilable rifts occurring between him and Loomis. He could sense the time when those rifts would extend to all areas, and, without Reintegration, they would have to go their separate ways—in one body.

Which would be madness.

“You won’t go back?” Loomis asked.

“No.”

“Then I’m taking over!”

Loomis’ personality surged in a surprise attack and seized partial control of the body’s motor functions. Crompton was stunned for a moment. Then, as he felt control slipping away from him, he grimly closed with Loomis, and the battle was begun.

IT WAS a silent war, fought by the light of a smoking kerosene lamp that grew gradually dimmer toward dawn. The battleground was the Crompton mind. The prize was the Crompton body, which lay shivering on a canvas cot, perspiration pouring from its forehead, eyes staring blankly at the light, a nerve in its forehead twitching steadily.

Crompton was the dominant personality; but he was weakened by conflict and guilt, and hampered by his own scruples. Loomis, weaker but single-minded, certain of his course, totally committed to the struggle, managed to hold the vital motor functions and block the flow of antidots.

For hours the two personalities were locked in combat, while the feverish Crompton body moaned and writhed on the cot. At last, in the gray hours of the morning, Loomis began to gain ground. Crompton gathered himself for a final effort, but couldn’t bring himself to make it. The Crompton body was already dangerously overheated by the fight; a little more, and neither personality would have a corpus to inhabit.

Loomis, with no scruples to hold him back, continued to press forward, seized vital synapses and took over all motor functions.

By sunrise, Loomis had won a total victory.

Shakily Loomis got to his feet. He touched the stubble on his chin, rubbed his numbed fingertips, and looked around. It was his body now. For the first time since Mars he was seeing and feeling directly, instead of having all sensory information filtered and relayed to him through the Crompton personality. It felt good to breathe the stagnant air, to feel cloth against his body, to be hungry, to be alive! He had emerged from a gray shadow world into a land of brilliant colors. Wonderful! He wanted to keep it just like this.

Poor Crompton...

“Don’t worry, old man,” Loomis said. “You know, I’m doing this for your good also.”

There was no answer from Crompton.

“We’ll go back to Mars,” Loomis said. “Back to Elderberg. Things will work out.”

Crompton did not, or could not, answer, Loomis became mildly alarmed.

“Are you there, Crompton? Are you all right?”

No answer.

Loomis frowned, then hurried outside to the commander’s tent.

"I'VE CHANGED my mind about finding Dan Stack," Loomis told the commander. "He really sounds too far gone."

"I think you've made a wise decision," the commander said.

"So I should like to return to Mars immediately."

The commander nodded. "All spaceships leave from Port New Haarlem, where you came in."

"How do I get back there?"

"Well, that's a little difficult," the commander told him. "I suppose I could loan you a native guide. You'll have to trek back across the Thompson Mountains to Ou-Barkar. I suggest you take the Desset Valley route this time, since the Kmikti Horde is migrating across the central rain-forest, and you can never tell about those devils. You'll reach Ou-Barker in the rainy season, so the semis won't be going through to Depotville. You might be able to join the salt caravan travelling the short way through Knife Pass, if you get there in time. If you don't, the trail is relatively easy to follow by compass, if you compensate for the variation zones. Once you've reached Depotville the rains will be in full career. Quite a sight, too. Perhaps you can catch a heli to New St. Denis and another to East Marsh, but I doubt it because of the *zicre*. Winds like that can mess up aircraft rather badly. So perhaps you could take the paddleboat to East Marsh, then a freighter down the Inland Zee to Port New Haarlem. I believe there are several good hurricane ports along the southern shore, in case the weather grows extreme. I personally prefer to travel by land or air. The final decision of route, of course, rests with you."

"Thank you," Loomis said faintly.

"Let me know what you decide," the commander said.

Loomis thanked him and returned to his tent in a state of nerves. He thought about the trip back across mountains and swamps, through primitive settlements, past migrating hordes. He visualized the complications added by the rains and the *zicre*. Never had his free-wheeling, imagination performed any better than it did now, conjuring up the horrors of that trip back.

It had been hard getting here; it would be much harder returning. And this time, his sensitive and esthetic soul would not be sheltered by the patient, long-suffering Crompton. He would have to bear the full sensory impact of wind, rain, hunger, thirst, exhaustion and fear. He would have to eat the coarse foods and drink the foul water. And he would have to perform the complicated routines of the trail, which Crompton had painfully learned and which he had ignored.

The total responsibility would be his. He would have to choose the route and make the critical decisions, for Crompton's life and for his own.

But could he? He was a man of the cities, a creature of society. His life-problems had been the quirks and twists of people, not the moods and passions of nature. He had avoided the raw and lumpy world of sun and sky, living entirely in mankind's elaborate burrows and intricate ant-hills. Separated from the earth by sidewalks, doors, windows and ceilings, he had come to doubt the strength of that gigantic grinding machine of nature about which the older authors wrote so engagingly, and which furnished such excellent conceits for poems and songs. Nature, it had seemed to Loomis, sun-bathing on a placid Martian summer day or drowsily listening to the whistle of wind against his window on a stormy night, was grossly overrated.

But now, shatteringly, he had to ride the wheels of the grindstone.

Loomis thought about it and suddenly pictured his own end. He saw the time when his energies would be exhausted, and he would be lying in some windswept pass or sitting with bowed head in the driving rain of the marshlands. He would try to go on, searching for the strength that is said to lie beyond exhaustion. And he would not find it. A sense of utter futility would pass over him, alone and lost in the immensity of all outdoors. At that point life would seem too much effort, too much strain. He, like many before him, would then admit defeat, give up, lie down, and wait for death.

Loomis whispered, "Crompton?"

No answer.

"Crompton! Can't you hear me? I'll put you back in command. Just get us out of this overgrown greenhouse. Get us back to Earth or Mars! Crompton, I don't want to die!"

Still no answer.

"All right, Crompton," Loomis said in a husky whisper. "You win. Take over. Do anything you want. I surrender, it's all yours. Just please, take over!"

"Thank you," Crompton said icily, and took over control of the Crompton body.

In ten minutes he was back in the commander's tent, saying that he had changed his mind again. The commander nodded wearily, deciding that he would never understand people.

Soon Crompton was seated in the center of a large dugout canoe, with trade-goods piled around him. The paddlers set up a lusty chant and pushed onto the river. Crompton turned and watched until the Vigilantes' tents were lost around a bend in the river.

To Crompton, that trip down the Blood River was like a passage to the beginning of time. The six natives dipped their paddles in silent unison, and the canoe glided like a water-spider over the broad, slow-moving stream. Gigantic ferns hung over the river's bank, and quivered when the canoe came near, and stretched longingly toward them on long stalks. Then the paddlers would raise the warning shout and the canoe would be steered back to midstream, and the ferns would droop again in the noonday heat. They came to places where the trees had interlaced overhead, forming a dark, leafy tunnel. Then Crompton and the paddlers would crouch under the canvas of the tent, letting the boat drift through on the current, hearing the soft splatter of corrosive sap dropping around them. They would emerge again to the glaring white sky, and the natives would man their paddles.

"Ominous," Loomis said nervously.

"Yes, quite ominous," Crompton agreed, growing overawed by his surroundings.

The Blood River carried them deep into the interior of the Continent. At night, moored to a midstream boulder, they could hear the war-hums of hostile Ais. One day two canoes of Ais pulled into the stream behind them. Crompton's men leaned into their paddles and the canoe sprinted forward. The hostiles clung doggedly to them, and Crompton took out a rifle and waited. But his paddlers, inspired by fear, increased their lead, and soon the raiders were lost behind a bend of the river.

They breathed more easily after that. But at a narrow bend they were greeted by a shower of arrows from both banks. One of the paddlers slumped across the gunwale, pierced four times. The rest leaned to their paddles, and soon were out of range.

They dropped the dead Ais overboard, and the hungry creatures of the river squabbled over his disposition. After that, a great armored creature with crablike arms swam behind the canoe, his round head raised above the water, waiting doggedly for more food. Even rifle bullets wouldn't drive him away, and his presence gave Crompton nightmares.

The creature received another meal when two paddlers died of a grayish mold that crept up their paddles. The crab-like creature accepted them and waited for more. But this river god protected his own. A raiding party of hostiles, seeing him, raised a great shout and fled back into the jungle.

He clung behind them for the final hundred miles of the journey. And, when they came at last to a moss-covered wharf on the river bank, he stopped, watched disconsolately for a while, then turned back upstream.

The paddlers pulled to the ruined dock. Crompton climbed onto it and saw a piece of wood daubed with red paint. Turning it over he saw written on it, "Blood Delta. Population 92."

Nothing but jungle lay beyond. They had reached Dan Stack's final retreat.

A narrow, overgrown path led from the wharf to a clearing in the jungle. With the clearing was what looked like a ghost town. Not a person walked on its single dusty street, and no faces peered out of the low, unpainted buildings. The little town baked silently under the white noonday glare, and Crompton could hear no sound but the scuffle of his own footsteps in the dirt.

"I don't like this," Loomis said.

Crompton walked slowly down the street. He passed a row of storage sheds with their owners' names crudely printed across the walls. He passed an empty saloon, its door hanging by one hinge, its mosquito-netting windows ripped. He went by three deserted stores, and came to a fourth which had a sign saying, "Stack & Finch. Supplies."

Crompton entered. Trade goods were in neat piles on the floor, and more goods hung from the ceiling rafters. There was no one inside.

"Anyone here?" Crompton called. He got no answer, and went back to the street.

At the end of the town he came to a sturdy, barn-like building. Sitting on a stool in front of it was a tanned and moustached man of perhaps fifty. He had a revolver thrust into his belt. His stool was tilted back against the wall, and he appeared to be half asleep.

"Dan Stack?" Crompton asked.

"Inside," the man said.

Crompton walked to the door. The moustached man stirred, and the revolver was suddenly in his hand.

"Move back away from that door," he said.

"Why? What's wrong?"

"You mean you don't know?" the moustached man asked.

"No! Who are you?"

"I'm Ed Tyler, peace officer appointed by the citizens of Blood Delta and confirmed in office by the commander of the Vigilantes. Stack's in jail. This here place is the jail, for the time being."

"How long is he in for?" Crompton asked.

"Just a couple hours."

"Can I speak to him?"

"Nope."

"Can I speak to him when he gets out?"

"Sure," Tyler said, "but I doubt he'll answer you."

"Why?"

The peace officer grinned wryly. "Stack will just be in jail a couple hours on account of this afternoon we're taking him *out* of the jail and hanging him by the neck until he's dead. After we've performed that little chore you're welcome to all the talking you want with him, But like I said, I doubt he'll answer you."

Crompton was too tired to feel much shock. He asked, "What did Stack do?"

"Murder."

"A native?"

"Hell no," Tyler said in disgust. "Who gives a damn about natives? Stack killed a man name of Barton Finch. His own partner. Finch isn't dead yet, but he's going fast. Old Doc says he won't last out the day, and that makes it murder. Stack was tried by a jury of his peers and found guilty of killing Barton Finch, breaking Billy Redburn's leg, busting two of Eli Talbot's ribs, wrecking Moriarty's Saloon, and generally disturbing the peace. The judge—that's me—prescribed hanging by the neck as soon as possible. That means this afternoon, when the boys are back from working on the new dam."

"When did the trial take place?" Crompton asked.

"This morning."

"And the murder?"

"About three hours before the trial."

"Quick work," Crompton said.

"We don't waste no time here in Blood Delta," Tyler said proudly.

"I guess you don't," Crompton said. "You even hang a man before his victim's dead."

"I told you Finch is going fast," Tyler said, his eyes narrowing. "Watch yourself, stranger. Don't go around imputing the justice of Blood Delta, or you'll find yourself in plenty trouble. We don't need no fancy lawyer's tricks to tell us right from wrong."

Loomis whispered urgently to Crompton, "Leave it alone, let's get out of here."

Crompton ignored him. He said to the sheriff, "Mr. Tyler, Dan Stack is my half-brother."

"Bad luck for you," Tyler said.

"I'd really appreciate seeing him. Just for five minutes. Just to give him a last message from his mother."

"Not a chance," the sheriff said.

Crompton dug into his pocket and took out a grimy wad of bills. "Just two minutes."

"Well. Maybe I could—damn!"

Following Tyler's gaze, Crompton saw a large group of men coming down the dusty street.

"Here come the boys," Tyler said. "Not a chance now, even if I wanted to. I guess you can watch the hanging, though."

Crompton moved back out of the way. There were at least fifty men in the group, and more coming. For the most part they were lean, leathery, hard-bitten no-nonsense types, and most of them carried sidearms. They conferred briefly with the sheriff.

"Don't do anything stupid," Loomis warned.

"There's nothing I can do," Crompton said.

Sheriff Tyler opened the barn door. A group of men entered and came out dragging a man. Crompton was unable to see what he looked like, for the crowd closed around him.

He followed as they carried the man to the far edge of town, where a rope had been thrown across one limb of a sturdy tree.

"Up with him!" the crowd shouted.

"Boys!" came the muffled voice of Dan Stack, "Let me speak!"

"To hell with that," a man shouted. "Up with him!"

"My last words!" Stack shrieked.

Suddenly the sheriff called out, "Let him say his piece, boys. It's a dying man's right. Go ahead, Stack, but don't take too long about it."

They had put Dan Stack on a wagon, the noose around his neck, the free end held by a dozen hands. At last Crompton was able to see him. He stared, fascinated by this long-sought-for segment of himself.

Dan Stack was a large, solidly built man. His thick, deeply lined features showed the marks of passion and hatred, fear and sudden violence, secret sorrow and secret vice. He had wide, flaring nostrils, a thick-lipped mouth set with strong teeth, and narrow, treacherous eyes. Coarse black hair hung over his inflamed forehead, and there was a dark stubble on his fiery cheeks. His face betrayed his stereotype—the Choleric Humour of Air, caused by too much hot yellow bile, bringing a man quickly to anger and divorcing him from reason.

Stack was staring overhead at the glowing white sky. Slowly he lowered his head, and the bronze fixture on his right hand flashed red in the steady glare.

"Boys," Stack said, "I've done a lot of bad things in my time."

"You telling us?" someone shouted.

"I've been a liar and a cheat," Stack shouted. "I've struck the girl I loved and struck her hard, wanting to hurt. I've stolen from my own dear parents. I've brought red murder to the unhappy natives of this planet. Boys, I've not lived a good life!"

The crowd laughed at his maudlin speech.

"But I want you to know," Stack bellowed, "I want you to know that I've struggled with my sinful nature and tried to conquer it. I've wrestled with the old devil in my soul, and fought him the best fight I knew how. I joined the Vigilantes, and for two years I was as straight a man as you'll find. Then the madness came over me again, and I killed."

"You through now?" the sheriff asked.

"But I want you all to know one thing," Stack shrieked, his eyeballs rolling in his red face. "I admit the bad things I've done, I admit them freely and fully, But boys, I did not kill Barton Finch!"

"All right," the sheriff said. "If you're through now we'll get on with it."

Stack shouted, "Listen to me! Finch was my friend, my only friend in the world! I was trying to help him, I shook him a little to bring him to his senses. And when he didn't, I guess I lost my head and busted up Moriarty's Saloon and fractured a couple of the boys. But before God I swear I didn't harm Finch!"

"Are you finished now?" the sheriff asked.

Stack opened his mouth, closed it again, and nodded.

"All right, boys," the sheriff said. "Let's go!"

Men began to move the wagon upon which Stack was standing. And Stack, with a look of hopeless desperation on his face, caught sight of Crompton.

And recognized him.

Loomis was speaking to Crompton very rapidly. "Watch out, take it easy, don't do anything, don't believe him, look at his record, remember his history, he'll ruin us, smash us to bits. He's dominant, he's powerful, he's homicidal, he's evil."

Crompton, in a fraction of a second, remembered Dr. Berrenger's estimate of his chances for a successful Reintegration. Madness, or worse.

"Totally depraved," Loomis was saying, "evil, worthless, completely hopeless!"

But Stack was part of him! Stack too longed for transcendence, had fought for self-mastery, had failed and fought again. Stack was not completely hopeless, no more than Loomis or he himself was completely hopeless.

But was Stack telling the truth? Or had that impassioned speech been a last-minute bid to the audience in hope of a reprieve?

He would have to assume Stack's good faith. He would have to give Stack a chance.

As the wagon was pushed clear, Stack's eyes were fastened upon Crompton's. Crompton made his decision and let Stack in.

The crowd roared as Stack's body plunged from the edge of the cart, contorted horribly for a moment, then hung lifeless from the taut rope. And Crompton reeled under the impact of Stack's mind entering his.

Then he fainted.

CROMPTON AWOKE to find himself lying on a cot in a small, dimly lighted room.

"You all right?" a voice asked. After a moment Crompton recognized Sheriff Tyler bending over him.

"Yes, fine now," Crompton said automatically.

"I guess a hanging's something of a shock to a civilized man like yourself. Think you'll be OK if I leave you alone?"

"Certainly," Crompton answered dully.

"Good. Got some work to do. I'll look in on you in a couple hours."

Tyler left. Crompton tried to take stock of himself.

Integration . . . Fusion . . . Completion . . . Had he achieved it during the healing time of unconsciousness? Tentatively he searched his mind.

He found Loomis wailing disconsolately, terribly frightened, babbling about the Orange Desert, camping trips at All Diamond Mountain, the pleasures of women, luxury, sensation, beauty.

And Stack was there, solid and immovable, unfused.

Crompton spoke to him, mind to mind, and knew that Stack had been absolutely and completely sincere in his last speech. Stack sincerely wished for reform, self-control, moderation.

And Crompton also knew that Stack was completely and absolutely *unable* to reform, to exercise self-control, to practice moderation. Even now, in spite of his efforts, Stack was filled with a passionate desire for revenge. His mind rumbled furiously, a deep counterpoint to Loomis' shrill babbling. Great dreams of revenge swam in his mind, gaudy plans to conquer all Venus. Do something about the damned natives, wipe them out, make room for Terrans. Rip that damned Tyler limb from limb. Machine-gun the whole town, pretend the natives had done it. Build up a body of dedicated men, a private army of worshippers of STACK, maintain it with iron discipline, no weakness, no hesitation. Cut down the Vigilantes and no one would stand in the way of conquest, murder, revenge, fury, terror!

Struck from both sides, Crompton tried to maintain balance, to extend his control over the two personalities. He fought to fuse the components into a single entity. A stable whole. But the minds struck back, refusing to yield their autonomy. The lines of cleavage deepened, new and irreconcilable schisms appeared, and Crompton felt his own stability undermined and his sanity threatened.

Then Dan Stack, with his baffled and unworkable reforming urge, had a moment of lucidity.

"I'm sorry," he said. "Can't help. You need the other."

"What other?"

"I tried," Stack moaned. "I tried to reform! But there was too much of me, too much conflict, hot and cold, on and off. Thought I could cure it myself. So I schismed."

"You what?"

"Can't you hear me?" Stack asked. "Me, I was schizoid too. Latent. It showed up here on Venus. When I went back to Port New Haarlem I got another Durier body, and fissioned . . . I thought everything would be easier if I was simpler. But I was wrong!"

"There's another of us?" Crompton cried. "Of course we can't Reintegrate! Who is it, where is he?"

"I tried," Stack moaned, "Oh, I tried! We were like brothers, him and me. I thought I could learn from him, he was so quiet and good and patient and calm! I was learning! Then he started to give up."

"Who was it?" Crompton asked.

"So I tried to help him, tried to shake him out of it. But he was failing fast, he just didn't care to live. My last chance was gone and I went a little crazy and shook him and broke up Moriarty's Saloon. But I didn't kill Barton Finch! He just didn't want to live!"

"Finch is the last component?"

"Yes! You must go to Finch before he lets himself die, and you must bring him in. He's in the little room in back of the store. You'll have to hurry. . ."

Stack fell back into his dreams of red murder, and Loomis babbled about the blue Xanadu Caverns.

Crompton lifted the Crompton body from the cot and dragged it to the door. Down the street he could see Stack's store. Reach the store, he told himself, and staggered out into the street.

HE WALKED a million miles. He crawled for a thousand years, up mountains, across rivers, past deserts, through swamps, down caverns that led to the center of the Earth, and out again to immeasurable oceans, which he swam to their furthest shore. And at the long journey's end, he came to Stack's store.

In the back room, lying on a couch with a blanket pulled up to his chin, was Finch, the last hope for Reintegration. Looking at him, Crompton knew the final hopelessness of his search.

Finch lay very quietly, his eyes open and unfocused and unreachable, staring at nothing. His face was the great, white, expressionless face of an idiot. Those placid Buddha features showed an inhuman calm, expecting nothing and wanting nothing. A thin stream of saliva bubbled from his lips, and his heart beat occasionally. Least adequate of the three, he was the ultimate expression of the Earthly Humour of Phlegm, which makes a man passive and uncaring.

Crompton forced back madness and crawled to the bedside. He stared into the idiot's eyes and tried to force Finch to see him, recognize him, join him.

Finch saw nothing.

He had failed. Crompton allowed the tired, overstrained Crompton body to slump by the idiot's bedside. Quietly he watched himself slip toward madness.

Then Stack, with his despairing reformer's zeal, emerged from his dream of revenge. Together with Crompton he willed the idiot to look and see. And Loomis searched for and found the strength beyond exhaustion, and joined them in the effort.

Three together they stared at the idiot. And Finch, evoked by three-quarters of himself, parts calling irresistibly for the whole, made a final rally. A brief expression flickered in his eyes. He *recognized*.

And entered.

Crompton felt the vast flooding patience and tolerance of Finch. The Four Essential Humours of the Temperament, Earth, Air, Fire and Water, were joined at last. And at last fusion was possible.

But what was this? What was happening? What force was taking over now, driving everything before it?

Crompton shrieked, tried to rip his throat open with his fingernails, nearly succeeded, and collapsed on the floor near the corpse of Finch.

WHEN THE body on the floor opened its eyes again, it yawned and stretched copiously, enjoying the sensation of air and light and color, content with itself and thinking that there was work for it to do on this world, and love to be found, and a whole life to be lived.

The body, former possession of Alistair Crompton, tenanted for a time by Edgar Loomis, Dan Stack and Barton Finch, stood up. It realized it would have to find a new name for itself.