

## Prologue: Cover Document

FROM: Expedition Leader, Terran Cultural Collection Expedition  
TO: The sentient being capable of decrypting this archive  
SUBJ: Foundations of the Terran expansion into star space and the threat of Reality Mastery

This report, cast as a trilogy of novels and strongly encrypted, details the true events of Terra's first overt, public contact with extraterrestrials.

It also discusses the first incident on Terra of the peril of Reality Mastery.

The reader has hopefully already read *Torpedo Junction*, a fictionalized account of the early phases of the United States of America's involvement in the Second Global War. This, along with Admiral McDonald's book on Willy Ley, *The Man Who Gave the Moon*, also cast as a novel, was laid atop this archive, encrypted in a lesser cipher.

Already, a century after the events described in this archive, the "official" and popular accounts of them are varying widely from the truth known to me and my colleagues. Such fables might as well have issued from a man behind a curtain, to whom no attention should be paid.

In particular, the published accounts of the Contact and of the origin of the technologies used by Terra in her expansion into the nearby interstellar neighborhood are all bogus. The true accounts are written here.

Neither we of the Terran Cultural Collection Expedition nor our parent culture invented any of those technologies. Indeed, we have invented little of any consequence in the practical arts.

Keep that fact in mind as you read.

# 1: The Pentagon Paperless

30 September 1970

Admiral of the Fleet Anson McDonald, Chief of Naval Operations these past three years, frowned at the note before him. Outside, the leaves fell like his hopes for a quiet day at the office. The head of the Office of Naval Intelligence needed to see him at once, reason unspecified. Normally, Kennedy always mentioned a reason, though it was often a false front for something else. When he didn't, that only meant one thing, and it wasn't his assessment of what the Soviets were up to.

After a brusque phone call to ONI, Admiral John F. Kennedy, son of one president and elder brother to another, strode into McDonald's office with a crisp salute. McDonald recalled his first meeting with Kennedy, in the aftermath of the Battle of Oahu. He had long since forgiven, but never forgotten, the young green ensign who had greeted him with the lousiest salute he had ever seen.

"Star Chamber, Mr. Kennedy," said McDonald.

"Naturally, sir."

McDonald opened a closet, fiddled with something on the wall behind the coats, and they ducked through the door he unlocked. The room they entered was where he conducted his most secret meetings, and where he kept most of his confidential documents. The days were long gone when a locked drawer would do.

"Mac, it's the saucer business again," said Kennedy.

"I thought as much. Which of your three investigative groups is it, this time?"

"None of the above. We need to activate the fourth again."

"Oh, no. Just you, me, and Heinlein, eh? What brought this on? I thought two of those groups were secure."

“They are. MJ-12 knows about the first group, but that one was meant to be found. They suspect the existence of the second group. I’m certain the third’s still airtight. But we need to work independently of them. Bobby’s worried about the UFO situation.”

“I know his opinion of the Condon Report—dandy fertilizer. What’s on his mind?” asked McDonald. Privately, he considered the Condon Committee’s work to be intellectually fraudulent. Condon’s conclusion, stated at the beginning of the report, was frequently contradicted by the supporting evidence he published. Had the fraud been financial, criminal charges would have been in order. As it was, knowledgeable readers shrugged it off, and even laughed at it. It was sometimes called “the Condom Report” in ufological circles, because it stopped the contagion of undesirable information.

McDonald had evidence it was a put-up job by the Air Force, no doubt supported by the MJ-12 secrecy group, to declare the UFO problem solved once and for all as nonexistent. Shortly afterwards, the Air Force publicly dissolved Project Blue Book, announcing they were out of the flying saucer business.

“He talked to me last night in the White House. The last two nights, when he was working late alone, he got some kind of outsider talking into his head, or that was how he put it. He said there were two people talking to him, a man and a woman. They said open contact with their people, who are from another star and planet, was imminent, but that we would need to help with the arrangements. They want to talk to him in public. But not just yet.”

“Oh, fine. Were these the Grays? The Nordics?”

“He said he got a brief view of them. Black hair, light brown skin, and dressed like illustrations out of a book of Bible stories. Not Nordic at all. Just as clearly, they weren’t Grays. He also got their names: Enki and Inanna.”

“What does the Chief want us to do about this?” McDonald asked.

“He wants us to get in better touch with these people, and see about these arrangements. I let him know we had a special group in the Navy involved with such things, without naming any principals. He told me to get on it. I warned him not to breathe a word to anyone else.”

“So, we’ve a hot potato in our hands, and it involves telepathy. We gotta keep this among ourselves. Heinlein’s always claimed, at least privately, to be a psi sensitive. I don’t know if he’s ever talked to a flying saucer, but let’s have him try. He’s around the Pentagon today; get him over here. I’ll wait in my office.”

Oh, God. Something was finally breaking on the UFO front, and it wasn’t from any known alien group. As far as McDonald knew, there were five kinds of aliens reported, and these didn’t fit any of them.

First, there were the Nordics. On the surface, they were hilarious, being responsible for the kooky “contactees,” such as George Adamski, Truman Bethurum, Cedric Allingham, and George Van Tassel. They were blonde, beautiful humans who gave out uniformly hokey messages to everyone they talked to. It was really simple stuff like, “Ban the Bomb, live in peace and brotherhood, or we will destroy you, lest you contaminate the Universe.” *The Day the Earth Stood Still* cashed in on the contactee craze. That film’s only mistake was that the producers didn’t dye Michael Rennie blond.

Most serious researchers shunned all reports of the Nordics. McDonald didn't; he knew they were there. One of them, a man calling himself "Ashtar of the Galactic Command," recently jammed every radio and television channel of the BBC for over an hour while he broadcast a saccharine sermon to everyone in the UK. McDonald knew his communications; anyone who could take over "the Beeb" like that was formidable.

The Bears were of little account—rarely seen, and disinclined to talk to anyone. Their observed behavior added up to either field botany or simple amateur collecting. Even rarer were the Bugs. A few times, a giant praying mantis, some eight feet long and glowing red, had been spotted at night in rural areas. Both Bug and witness tended to run like hell away from each other. Once or twice, Bugs were seen with Grays, meaning the two races could be allies. This gave McDonald pause.

The Men In Black were a mixed bag of problems. They were, alas, all too common, and they came in two varieties. The more common one was simple—American spooks, probably working for the Air Force, the shadowy MJ-12 organization, or both. The other group had to be aliens, for they were sometimes observed to drive late-model Cadillacs without any wheels. Both groups intimidated UFO witnesses, sometimes even before they tried to report their sightings, and had the bad habit of impersonating military intelligence agents. McDonald knew Kennedy was particularly annoyed about the Men In Black. Imposture of his agents was a cardinal sin—he'd run a taut ship in the ONI since the middle of the Eisenhower administration. Like Admiral Rickover in the atomic subs field, Kennedy was an organizational fixture, never likely to budge until ill health or mandatory retirement forced him out.

For that matter, he and Erwin "Tex" Rommel were also organizational fixtures—Tex had sat for six years as CNO with Anson as his deputy until autumn of 1967. Congress awarded him his fifth star in the same bill that got him his current prestigious, uncomfortable post.

Last and worst were the Grays, the most frequently sighted of the uninvited visitors from space, and the most sinister. It was bad enough that they were in the habit of kidnapping American citizens. What was worse was that they did this with the permission of at least one organ of the American government.

Joseph P. Kennedy Sr. succeeded FDR on the latter's death. Some two years later, he ordered the formation of a secret committee to investigate the growing problem of what were then called "flying saucers." This group, known variously as Majic-12, Majestic-12, or MJ-12, hit pay dirt almost immediately. Within a few months of one another, two UFOs crashed in New Mexico, one near Roswell and the other at Aztec, not far from Farmington. Both of these were operated by the Grays, who wanted to retrieve the bodies of the crash victims.

The new MJ-12 group managed a contact with them, in which said bodies were returned, and also in which a working agreement was arrived at. The Grays would give the MJ-12 group several examples of their technology, including a functioning saucer, in return for permission to temporarily kidnap Americans for purposes of scientific research. The Grays also agreed to avoid permanently harming their victims, and to preserve secrecy by making them forget their experiences.

President Kennedy endorsed the agreement, and apparently the Grays thought of it as a treaty. It was no such thing, of course, having never been debated in the Senate, much less ratified by same. McDonald considered this to be a serious breach of faith with the American Constitution.

Eisenhower allowed the nefarious situation to continue, as he was briefed on it early in his first term. This was no rumor; Admiral Kennedy somehow came by a copy of several MJ-12 documents and showed them to McDonald. They included the founding document, the briefing paper shown to Ike, a field operative's training manual, and a terse memo from the MJ-12 head, dated in 1961, in which the head directed that the newly elected President, Lyndon B. Johnson, not be informed of MJ-12 or of the true state of affairs regarding UFOs. Apparently, Johnson was thought to be a security risk, due to his being a "Communist sympathizer."

That last would have been a belly laugh, had its disproof not been so serious. In the fall of 1962, Admiral Kennedy and his boys in ONI sniffed out a crisis that never materialized. The Soviet military devised a plan to counter the American medium-range missiles based in Turkey by basing similar weapons in Cuba. Premier Khrushchev vetoed the scheme, stating to his generals that Johnson would stand firm, giving Russia the choice of fighting or backing down. He hadn't gained and retained his position, much less survived as one of Stalin's commissars, by playing the fool, and considered going toe-to-toe with LBJ to be a sure-fire failure. Rejecting military confrontations, he redoubled the Soviets' program of embarrassing America openly in the cultural and technological arenas, all the while undermining as many emerging Third World governments as possible. To date, he showed no sign of letting up in any of those efforts.

Anson had only the vaguest idea how Kennedy's men eavesdropped on the veto communications; he thought it might be a listening post in Turkey. He knew the Army had one in Sinop; there might be others. From then to now, the Russians were far easier to spy on than MJ-12. Despite Johnson's liberal version of anti-Communism (or possibly because of it), that group never informed him of anything. The informational embargo now extended, evidently, to Robert Kennedy.

It wasn't hard to guess why Bobby was locked out. His naval brother had been covertly sparring with MJ-12 for the better part of two decades now. MJ-12 was a loose cannon—accountable to nobody and a parasite upon the US Government. So far, however, there was no way to get solid evidence against it, evidence that would stand up in either a civilian or a military court. Several men who got too close to the inner secret of the UFOs, or who found out too much about that group, died prematurely.

In the Navy, only McDonald, Kennedy, and Heinlein now knew about MJ-12. Admiral Roscoe Hillenkoetter had also known, but he was actually one of the twelve original top men in the suspect group. He once quietly informed Kennedy of the group's existence, and the ONI chief figured out the rest for himself. After that, Hillenkoetter clammed up, and was long since retired from both the Navy and the dark committee.

So, five races, only three of which were of any consequence, and none of which even vaguely resembled Biblical illustrations. Whoever these people calling themselves "Enki" and "Inanna" were, they were new to ufology and

probably unconnected with MJ-12. He remembered something old Erwin Rommel told him long ago about a story called *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Gilgamesh was called a king in the story, but Rommel always insisted he was really just a municipal mayor, ruling a small city named Uruk. He had a sidekick named Enkidu, and there was also a god in the tale named Enki. A goddess named Inanna was either Gilgamesh's mother, grandmother, or kid sister—the scholars hadn't doped that one out yet.

Whatever they were, Enki and Inanna probably had no connection with the ancient land of Sumer. McDonald was sure they were just using a couple of obscure, ancient names for swank.

Kennedy returned with Heinlein, and the three repaired silently to the Star Chamber. McDonald mused that the three men wore enough stars among them to fill the original American flag. He had five, being the sole active Admiral of the Fleet (the only other still alive was Erwin Rommel), while his companions bore four apiece. No doubt there would be speculation all over the D Ring of the Pentagon as to what these three top Navy brass were hatching, but he hoped nobody would ever guess what they were really up to. If anything about this little conspiracy ever got out to MJ-12, there would be hell to pay, probably followed by three funerals in Arlington.

"Bob, glad you could make it on short notice," said McDonald. "Jack, please fill him in on the current situation." Kennedy did so.

"I see," said Heinlein. "The ice is breaking up rapidly, after years of deep freeze. Any idea what Enki and Inanna want in this, apart from these unspecified 'arrangements?'"

"None," said McDonald. "This is where you come in. I need you to do some sensitive's work for us. Are you feeling up to telepathy today?"

"Perhaps. It depends mostly on the people on the other end."

"I've reason to believe they're telepaths, and good ones," said Kennedy. "Bobby doesn't have a smidgeon of the Second Sight, any more than I do. And yet, these people got through to him twice. I'd guess they're expecting one of us to attempt to call them. You're it, Bob."

Heinlein looked lost in thought for a moment. "Very well. I'll tap the table as the signal I've gotten through to them. Then you can feed me questions verbally. Not written, of course." In all the years of their little ufological study group, they had never, ever written anything down, relying instead on memory alone, for security reasons. They might keep a few outside documents secreted somewhere safe, for reference, but there were never any notes or anything else to show this research group had ever existed.

McDonald and Kennedy looked on while Heinlein slipped quickly into a trance. Presently, he tapped the table.

"What arrangements are we to make for you to open the contact?" asked McDonald.

"You are to wait patiently," said Heinlein, only he did not speak in his own voice. Somehow, he had pitched his voice into a feminine range, but not a falsetto. McDonald tried not to shudder at this. "There will be two other sensitives who will do the work for you."

"Who are you? You don't sound like Admiral Heinlein," said McDonald.

"I am Inanna. I repeat, wait for the sensitive go-betweens to come to you. They will be most helpful, and they will be indispensable to you in this matter of establishing public contact."

"But how will we know who they are?" asked McDonald.

"You will know them when they come to you," said Heinlein/Inanna. "There will be no doubt at all in your mind when they do so. Be patient and wait."

"How soon?" asked Kennedy.

"You are impatient. Contact should occur within the year, if all goes well."

"Are these sensitives American citizens?" asked McDonald.

"Patience," came the eerie answer.

"Who are they? Names?" asked Kennedy, with some asperity.

"Patience!" came the answer. "You have no need to know at this time. Admiral of the Fleet McDonald, you shall know them. They shall come to you, and to you alone. You may not contact either me or Enki again in this fashion. You must work through the go-betweens, when they come to you. Not before. Again, be patient. This conference is ended. Goodbye."

Heinlein slumped onto the conference table.

When he came to a few moments later, he asked, "What the hell was I saying? I thought I sounded like a woman!"

"You did," said McDonald. "Inanna, whoever she is, spoke through you somehow." He repeated the conversation for Heinlein's benefit.

"So, it's sit tight," said Heinlein.

"That it is," McDonald replied. "I strongly suggest we have no more group meetings until these go-betweens come to me. Don't even think about trying to identify them yourselves."

"Aye, aye, sir," said Kennedy. "But what do I tell my brother?"

"Tell him the situation is under control, but it won't come to fruition for a year. We won't have any dope at all for him for at least six months, maybe longer."

"Back to normal work, then," said Heinlein. He was sweating and looked haggard. "I'm glad she told us to buzz off. I don't ever want to repeat that business. Inanna packs one hell of a punch. Means well, but potent beyond my belief. I never want to mess with her again, and I suspect Enki is more of the same."

"Bob, you're not going back to work today," said McDonald. "You're going home to Leslyn for some rack time."

McDonald had to order Heinlein home to prevent overwork more often than he liked. The man's health was marginal and had been ever since the war. Only his superb ability, his spirit, and the influence of senior admirals kept him on active duty this long. He thought his old friend should go home permanently to his wife and his writing but didn't dare suggest this. As it was, he wondered where Heinlein got the energy to produce a novel every year while continuing to produce superior results in his department.

Kennedy was another part-time writer in poor health, only younger. In his case, his outside writings were guarded, astute commentaries on naval matters and foreign affairs, rather than fiction, although he'd been known to plant intelligence ruses in his books. The Soviets often swallowed these whole. For

instance, there was the atomic-powered bomber story, hinting that the X-6 project only appeared to fail, and that the Air Force was building bombers that could fly for months, limited only by their need to feed their crews. The Russian answer to the X-6 crashed, making an expensive mess someplace in Siberia. Then there was the time he suggested the US was building a fleet of faster submarines, as indeed it was—faster than the publicly-stated speed. The Soviets, thinking he meant “faster than observed speeds,” sank an untold sum of rubles into subs that would make fifty knots underwater—and were the noisiest things in the sea, at any speed. Worse, their reactors were dangerous to their own crews.

He also marveled at how the two men managed to keep up their sex lives. Kennedy and Heinlein were both inveterate, though discreet, tomcats, and age didn’t slow them down much. Surprisingly, their wives not only didn’t object to this, but practiced it themselves. Sauce for the goose, sauce for the gander? More than once, McDonald had received courteous propositions from Leslyn Heinlein and Norma Kennedy. Being thoroughly monogamous, he always politely declined them.

As they filed out of the secret room, Admiral McDonald gave himself an order to refrain from speculating on the identity of the mysterious go-betweens. They would turn up soon enough. Until then, he didn’t want to know what he had no need to know.



HQ to FIELD: Contact team activates soon. Stand by. Be alert.

FIELD to HQ: Roger. We need more lerts, huh?



Heinlein’s mind was easy for the Observer to pick, once the man’s guard was down post-meeting. So, the lady was calling herself “Inanna” again. This Contact project of hers would be fun to watch, no matter how it ended.

The Observer wasn’t about to lay a bet either way on the Contact; he only wagered when he meant business—and there was too much monkey business involved in this scheme. It resembled nothing so much as what the locals called a “Rube Goldberg device.” Too many moving parts.

Besides, there was an opposition faction which might pitch a *sabot* into the contrivance.

The Observer also considered the Shadow, a perennial thorn in the locals’ sides. It had never moved directly against his own people—it wasn’t necessary. Its MO centered around the creation of dissension, and the Observer’s crew did an excellent job of that unassisted—their collective talent for internal quarreling was responsible for the Trojan War, which had nearly gotten them kicked off the planet.

If the Shadow interfered actively in the Contact project, all bets were off, even Enki’s and Inanna’s.

## 2: Lost Planet Airman

“You are listening to KSCW, 90.5 on your FM dial, the Stereo Giant of the Walla Walla Empire. This is Ian McDonald, the Lost Planet Airman, bringing you music weird and wonderful from midnight until sign-off on this new day, 3 October 1970.” Ian hit switches and twisted “pots”—potentiometers—to start up his theme music, Jethro Tull’s “For Michael Collins, Jeffrey, and Me,” a song about the first landing on the Moon. Ian was a space and science fiction buff; he’d named his show after an old movie about a bunch of guys with a rocket-powered backpack.

Dyanne the Beautiful was comfortably ensconced in his lap. Ian reached around her to put a record on the second turntable and cue it up. After over a month on the air, Ian was well-practiced at reaching around her to cue up records and manage the control board. If she were a chunky young woman, she’d be in his way, but Dyanne was a petite thing and no trouble at all in the broadcast booth. All she had to do was be quiet when the “ON THE AIR” light was on, and not get cuddly and kissy when Ian needed to operate something.

“And now, it’s ‘His Holy Modal Majesty,’ from *Super Session*, by Mike Bloomfield and Al Kooper.” He performed a sleight-of-hand trick, doing three or four things at once with two hands, and the old, familiar guitar and synthesizer piece danced out into the ether. As he reached for a reel of tape, he felt a delicious smack on his lips. “Hold on. Gotta cue up this tape. ‘Holy Modal’ runs ten minutes. We’ll have plenty of time for that in a minute.”

“Of course,” said Dyanne. She punctuated this with another kiss and a tickle to his ear. *Such a sweet distraction*, Ian thought as he mounted the reel on the new station’s pride and joy, the just-acquired Revox monster deck. A few seconds of fooling with the tape until it was in just the right place, and the Beatles’ *Abbey Road* was ready to go. He’d promised some friends he’d run the whole thing early in tonight’s show. That meant even more time to neck. He’d just have to remember to interrupt the music on the half hour to give a station ID.

Dyanne made up for lost time the moment he pronounced the tape to be ready. One of the sweetest things about her was that, once they became a steady

pair early the previous year, she was delightfully assertive in the kiss-and-cuddle department. He never had to take the romantic lead, which was just as well. One night early on, he tried to unbutton the back of her dress. Her sudden response was, “Not unless we’re married!” So, that was that. Do anything and everything together as long as their clothes stayed on. They weren’t married—yet.

But they would be, someday. Ian was certain of that, although the time to propose was far in the nebulous future. They were sophomores at Sanford College and had a lot of work to do before the time would be ripe for wedding bells. He never knew how much he wanted to get into a girl’s dress until he met Dyanne.

Until then, she had her limits, and he respected them. His parents brought him up to be a gentleman, and Dyanne was emphatically a lady. Her mother was rich, and she herself was the prettiest girl in the stuffy Alpha Phi sorority. As far as he was concerned, she was the prettiest girl at Sanford, or indeed, in the world. Dad would argue that point, saying his Fair Rosamund, Ian’s mother, held that honor, but no matter.

After much wordless communication, Ian paused the tape for the station ID, just before “Here Comes the Sun.” That song was more appropriate for the Dawn Patrol, if KSCW had one. At present, the station was lucky to get anyone to come in at nine a.m. to do a morning show. Ian’s usual slot was midnight until sign-off on Friday nights, which for him generally meant four o’clock. Then Gary Suffren would come in at nine to open the station for the weekend with his terribly stilted three-hour classical show, which he called “Prelude and Transfiguration,” and which everyone else called either “Sufferin’ with Gary” or “Gilligan’s Three-hour Tour.”

“Honey,” said Ian, as Dyanne nibbled at his ear, “I need to get up and raid the teletype so I can do a rip-and-read at one.”

“At that hour? Don’t you think *I* am more important than the news?” She tickled the back of his neck. “I suppose you must. But first you must take this from me.” She squeezed him close and gave him a glorious French kiss. “Now, go and fix up your newscast. Just remember that your lap and lips belong to me alone.”

She slid out of his lap and he stumbled over to the transmitter, noting the meters hadn’t budged since he came on duty, not even the final output meter, which stayed rooted at 9.8 watts. Not that he needed to log the readings; he did that when he took the handoff at midnight. He was just concerned about the state of the equipment; he helped install most of it during the last two weeks of summer vacation. The final output was particularly critical. Although the FCC wasn’t overly concerned about minor variations in that reading, Ian and the other three technicians were. KSCW was a ten-watt FM educational station, and ten watts meant coverage of a six-mile radius. Anytime it rained on the antenna on the roof of the SUB—the Student Union Building—that reading would drop to eight or nine watts, and coverage suffered. One stormy night, it plummeted below seven, and the Sigma Chi house, at the far end of the Sanford campus, complained about crummy reception.

So far, news shows at KSCW were of two varieties. On most days, the regular news staff put together a thirty-minute newscast composed of stories edited from the teletype, plus a few local ones they went out and covered

themselves. Everyone was learning how to broadcast, and the quality of the daily dinnertime news was spotty. Then there were the sporadic rip-and-reads, which any DJ who so desired could do, often on the hour, but not always. The idea was to pull a few recent stories out of the teletype and read them as given by the wire service, sans editing.

He left the booth in Dyanne's care and looked at the pile of yellow paper the United Press teletype had spewed out in the next studio over. He found three decent stories and snipped them out of the endless roll on the floor. One of them was the first World Series game; although Ian wasn't much on sports, a lot of his listeners were. Another jumped out at him; it involved the man he knew as "Uncle Doc," one of his dad's old wartime buddies. To the rest of the world, he was Dr. Paul Shoemaker, perhaps the most respected (or feared) man around Embassy Row in Washington. There was also a piece about the worsening situation in the Netherlands East Indies (or Indonesia, as some called it). He wasn't sure about that one, but included it anyway, despite his mixed feelings about the place. He thought the islanders deserved a far better deal than they had gotten so far from the Dutch; on the other hand, he didn't want to see them go Communist any more than anyone else did, and the Dutch viceroy was another one of Dad's war buddies.

That seemed to go with being the son of a prominent man: Dad's friends, acquaintances, and colleagues often turned up in the news. Sometimes Dad did, as well, although he kept a remarkably low profile for the top admiral in the US Navy.

A fourth story caught his eye—this one was of scientific interest. That peculiar volcano in the English Midlands was acting up again. Anyone into geology would want to hear about this one. Ian picked up the news stories and returned to the booth and Dyanne.

He needed to cue up a couple more songs to make it to the hour, and hoped she wouldn't be too much of a distraction. Tonight, her game was "How thoroughly can I tease Ian without making him mess up on the air?" The truth of the matter was, their romance was full of them teasing one another until they were both "hot as a pistol," as Dad would say. But Dyanne did the hog's share of it, and he loved her all the more for it—she was the sexiest chick on campus by a long run, and all he had to do was follow her lead.

He was also thankful that she never insisted on being around when he had to dive into the station's innards with multimeter, oscilloscope, and solder iron. There were a few girls on the station's staff, but only one, his old friend Crazy Susan, was a technician—except for her, girls just didn't have what it took to do that kind of work. Ian tried to imagine the perfectly-groomed Dyanne—Zsa Zsa with a multimeter!—getting down under the main mixing board to solder a new connection to the primary busbar, and laughed to himself. Her dress might snag or ride up unacceptably, or her skyscraper pile of blonde curls might get caught in one of the cable harnesses, or she might even (horrors!) break a nail. No, tech work was no job for a gorgeous sorority chick like Dyanne.

But Dyanne was what she was, Dyanne the Beautiful, and her man was Ian McDonald, who needed to get back right away to his proper place—underneath her in the broadcast booth. Then he could run the next two songs and do his newscast.

Shortly before switching his mike on, he pulled his mouth from hers. “You’re real kissy tonight. When I go live, don’t kiss me on my lips. You got me on ‘simmer,’ which is nice, but don’t make me boil over on the air, okay?”

“Not on the lips when talking, yes,” she said. “But ‘simmer’ is for sissies. I love you so when you’re hot. I promise to keep you just under the boiling point—all the way to sign-off. I wish I could kiss your ears when you’re on the air. Must you wear those awful headphones?”

“Yes. I need them.”

With that, she kept her promise, her lips on his cheeks, as he switched his mike on, and the “ON THE AIR” sign lit up.

“You just heard ‘Attics of My Life,’ by the Warlocks, from your Lost Planet Airman on KSCW-FM Stereo, 90.5 in the town so nice they named it twice—Walla Walla. Next up, we have the One A.M. Rip-and-read News for you.

“First off, from Washington. Secretary of State Paul Shoemaker met today with Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko to discuss the possible easing of America’s long-standing trade embargo against Che Guevara’s regime in Cuba. Afterwards, Gromyko stated the talks had been frank. Dr. Shoemaker had no comment.

“In the Netherlands East Indies, insurgent forces under Party Chairman Soekarno drew their noose tighter around the beleaguered city of Surabaya. Dutch Viceroy Karel Doorman stated that relief forces were on the way and would break the siege soon. He promised that Soekarno would be, quote, hanged higher than Haman, as should have been done in 1945, unquote.

“In Yankee Stadium today, in Game One of the 1970 World Series, the Brooklyn Dodgers shut out the New York Yankees, one to nothing. Winning pitcher was the recently rehabbed Sandy Koufax, and loser was Mel Stottlemyre. Dodgers manager Fidel Castro stated, quote, Sandy can pitch better than I ever could, unquote. Between 1947 and 1965, Castro compiled a 302-154 win-loss record in Brooklyn and was inducted last summer into the Hall of Fame, in his first year of eligibility.

“And from the Bracton College geological station at St. Anne’s in the English Midlands comes this bulletin. Mount Edgestow is erupting again, after two weeks of increasing steaming. Ejected rocks have fallen as far as ten miles away, and a medium-grade lava flow is oozing down the mountainside in the direction of the former site of Belbury. G.C. Curry, the Warden of Bracton College, has directed the evacuation of all persons within twenty miles of the eruption, except for the volcanologists observing the event from stations at St. Anne’s and Cure Hardy. Curry does not expect the eruption to be either major or destructive, unlike the one in 1961 which severely damaged Cure Hardy, killing eleven, or the initial catastrophic eruption in 1947, estimated to have killed several hundred.

“And that’s the news, from the Lost Planet Airman. Next up, we have a real treat for you, a full half hour of James Douglas Morrison’s poetry, backed by Ray Manzarek on the organ, from their award-winning art film—*The Celebration of the Lizard*.”

The light went off, the great poet and auteur went on, and Dyanne was all over him again, shutting him up with a solid kiss.

“When I marry you, I’ll wear you out,” he thought he heard her say. But she couldn’t have said a thing. Her mouth was squarely on his, her tongue too busy for talk. Her voice had been right in his head—and his headphones were off. He must have imagined her talking.

He filed the odd experience away for future thought as Dyanne went at his ears, demanding every bit of his attention. It was going to be a long, passionate night.



The sun was rising when Ian signed off. Except for his operational pauses, including the periodic log entries, Dyanne kept him nice and hot. Luckily, whenever he boiled over, he recovered in time to handle the music. She used his pauses to repair her lipstick, no doubt the better to smear more of it all over him—the one drawback to her wonderfully heavy use of the paint and powder. He liked ladies painted to the point most women called “way too much,” but Mom and Eloise, his big sister, called “just right.”

He played his closing theme music, an off-brand little tune he recorded the previous summer at a science fiction convention. It was called “Hope Eyrie,” about Glenn’s and Armstrong’s first landing on the Moon, although neither astronaut was named in the song. The artist was a wild maenad of a young woman by the name of Leslie Fish, and he’d secured written permission from her to play it on the air, along with other songs of hers he’d recorded.

He then read the standard signoff spiel and played “The Star-Spangled Banner.” This was normally a boring formality, except that he now played the new Jimi Hendrix recording of it from the Woodstock Festival, which had just become available.

Dyanne was finally tired enough to accept a short (meaning around a minute) good-night kiss from him on her front porch. His knapsack full of records and tapes, he tramped slowly back to Balmer Hall, his dorm, and crashed out without bothering to undress, or even wash off the bright red lipstick Dyanne had left all over his face.



He awoke shortly before lunchtime to the phone ringing. His roomie answered it, hollering, “Ian, it’s for you. Guess who?”

“Coming!” That had to be Dyanne. Didn’t she ever sleep? He made his way into Crazy Susan’s room, where the phone was. “Hello,” he grunted.

“This is your favorite kissy lady,” said Dyanne. She made smacking noises. “I thought I’d call you about our date tonight. I’ve changed my mind about the movies. Let’s do a legitimate play, instead. *Richard III* at Harper Joy tonight—I got us a pair of tickets.”

“You wanted to see that next week.”

“I want to see it twice. One of my sorority sisters has the lead female role. As for dinner, I’ve made reservations for us at the Elks’ Club, at six o’clock. The play starts at eight, so we should have plenty of time. We go Dutch, of course.”

“Not ‘of course,’ Dyanne. I’m tired of Dutch treat. I can certainly afford to take you out to the Elks’ Club. I’m not broke!”

“But you’re poor compared to me. If you keep arguing, I’ll just pick up the whole check myself. I’ll be by at 5:30.”

“No, I’ll pick you up,” Ian argued.

“Darling, I won’t be seen at the Elks’ Club in your Volkswagen. We go in my Mercedes. Honestly, I don’t know why you drive that thing.”

“There’s nothing wrong with my Vee-Wee. I’ve had it since I was sixteen, it runs good, and it’s easy to fix. And I keep it looking good, too.”

“But it’s a Volkswagen! You’ve argued too much, dear. Tonight’s dinner is on me.”

Ian never won arguments with Dyanne. She reminded him of the current Star Trek joke at computer lab. “When Klingons program functions, they don’t have wimpy things like parameters. They have arguments. *And they always win them.*” Like father, like son—Dad had never won an argument with Mom, either. Oh, well. Dad always said, “To get along, go along. It works on Capitol Hill, it works in the Pentagon, and most important, it works at home.” With Dyanne, he did plenty of going along. In return, she was so sweet to him. He hoped they’d stay together long enough for him to scrape up the courage to propose.

“Five-thirty it is. Your Mercedes.”

“I’ll be wearing a blue evening gown. I’ll have Ellie doll me up all afternoon.”

“I don’t know why you need to do that. You looked good enough last night.”

“Silly Ian. You’ve no idea what it takes to keep me that way. You also don’t know how relaxing it is to be fussed over for hours. One of these days, I really ought to put you through what I do to make myself attractive. Then you might understand. Your hair’s long enough for a nice afternoon with Ellie, you know.”

“I’ll get my hair cut like Dad’s first.” Dyanne had been threatening stuff like that almost since they’d gotten together. She did this every time he mentioned how superfluous her maid’s work was. Someday, he’d let her do it, just to show her how dumb he’d look as a girl.

“Spoilsport,” said Dyanne.

“Besides, I already know all about being fussed over for hours by one particular girl.”

“Point taken. See you then.”

“I’ll be ready. Love you.”

“Hot date with Dyanne?” asked Crazy Susan as Ian hung up.

“What else? Don’t tell the fire marshal about her; I don’t want her condemned as a fire hazard.”

“Hey, when you gonna lay her? Then you won’t need a fire extinguisher.” For some reason, Susan, though nominally male, always spoke in a clear mezzo-soprano, as if her voice had never changed.

“When you gonna lay Cynthia?” Ian countered.

“No fair! I’m here, and she’s in Arizona.”

He sometimes thought “Susan” and “getting laid” never belonged in the same sentence. “Well, get her to transfer. You said she wants to switch from nursing to psychology—we got a lot better psych department than that cow college of hers.”

“You got a point. Say, that must’ve been some show you did last night. What’s with all the war paint? I mean, if you really want to wear lipstick, I can show you how to do it right.”

“Oh, kee-rist!” He’d forgotten about the marks Dyanne had left on him. Good thing Dyanne wasn’t a vampire—otherwise he’d be in the hospital, getting one hell of a transfusion. “Hey, can you keep it quiet this afternoon? I’m gonna be napping.”

“Don’t worry. I’m out all afternoon. I won’t see you until tomorrow; I’ve got the midnight-to-signoff spot tonight. I swapped slots with the Bear. When are we gonna get the schedule shaken out?”

“When hell freezes over, of course.”

“So, have a nice time with Dyanne. If I didn’t have Cynthia, I’d envy you.”

Crazy Susan left in a clicking of towering heels, her ornate updo and plump figure silhouetted briefly in the door. At the start of their freshman year, he’d quickly guessed how she managed her hair and makeup—she spent a lot of time every morning and evening over at Dyanne’s house, where she kept a guestroom and most of her clothes. No doubt that was why her half of the suite was empty of cosmetics and other feminine litter. Oh, Susie’s closet and bureau were crammed with dresses, skirts, blouses, and lingerie, but those weren’t all over the place, unlike her drum kit (at least her pair of marching-band cymbals hung on the wall where nobody would stumble over them). She’d worked with this and that would-be superstar band starting in junior high—she claimed she was the next Alice Cooper. Too bad she didn’t have much of a singing voice. She half-mournfully, half-jokingly compared herself to Florence Foster Jenkins, the would-be opera diva best known for her utter lack of vocal talent.

For some reason, being “the next Alice Cooper” and drumming up an expert storm—Ian thought she was the next Ginger Baker instead—earned Susan Calvin Coolidge the respect of most of the noisy young men of Balmer Hall. They treated her like a lady, or at least like a chick, and wrote her presence off as an administrative glitch. It didn’t hurt that she had a wry sense of humor, plenty of quick comebacks, and more knowledge of rock music than anyone else. That she was overweight (“I’m in shape,” she sometimes quipped. “Round is a shape”) probably slowed down the Lotharios and Don Juans in the dorm, too—Balmer Hall seemed to have an oversupply of those.

They’d known each other as long as he could remember and were roommates since they were freshmen, and they got along fine. Romance never tempted Ian where Susan was concerned; he just didn’t think of that about the girl with whom he’d built radios and Erector set contraptions, made chemistry-set stencils, discussed Heinlein, Clarke, Asimov, Burroughs and Bradbury, launched model rockets, planned missions to Mars using books and tables by Ley and Oberth, and constructed telescopes from mirror-grinding scratch.

She wasn’t quite the girl next door—her mother, Dyanne’s mother, and Mom were all old friends, and the Coolidges summered in the Puget Sound to beat the Arizona heat. When it came time to go off to college, Mom had suggested Sanford because it was top-ranked, and Susan would be going there.

Still, it was odd finding his closest long-time friend—most kids he knew around the Navy base came and went—assigned to his dorm room, rather than

with the women. A discreet session with his dorm's house mother cleared the air.

Susan was born male, raised female, and was the daughter of a close friend of a Very Important Donor. The women's dorms were where common sense would have put her, but the trustees didn't always run to that—said donor was told the rules *must* be obeyed in this case, although the college would consult with the donor regarding roommate assignments. He had an excellent guess as to who the Very Important Donor was.

Before napping, he checked his suits. Dyanne was dressing up tonight; that meant his tux. He'd had it since high school for the prom, which he missed at the last minute due to a busted romance, but it had come in handy for Eloise's wedding last summer, as well as several formal dates with Dyanne. Thank heaven his folks had taught him the fine points of how to wear a suit comfortably, and how to switch from casual manners to formal and back without a hitch. Dyanne insisted he be a perfect gentleman with her, in public. It was only in private that she changed into Dyanne, the Osculating Octopus.

He wondered how she would like it if he got some Mod clothes, like the duds worn by Pete Townshend of the Who. Seattle did have an avant-garde tailor he could go to, but he always needed a new piece of stereo gear, or some more tools. Tech beat style every time.



The date went fine. Dyanne was grand—never a moment when she wasn't—in a sky-blue mermaid gown that showed off every curve of her figure, while covering most of it. It being early October and nippy, she also wore a light-colored mink stole. The only annoyance was that, as always when dating in her Mercedes, her maid drove, while they rode in the capacious back seat.

Dinner at the Elks' was delicious, and Ian asked for and got the strong navy coffee he was used to, that being the only sort ever brewed in the McDonald household. Dorm coffee had no punch to it, and Dyanne's well-meant attempts also fell short. Someday, he'd have to get Mom to show his girlfriend—or her cook—how to make real coffee. True to her promise, when the check arrived, Dyanne slipped him a couple of twenty-spots under the table to cover it. He accepted with good grace; he'd already lost that dispute.

*Richard III* was brilliant. Dr. Freeman, Sanford's chief drama coach, had pulled off another blockbuster. He started the play with some scenes from *Part Three of Henry VI*, which made a great introduction. Particularly effective was the soliloquy in which the royal hunchback announced he could "put the murderous Machiavel to school," and as for the crown, he would "pluck it down." The ghost scene, in which every victim he'd murdered bade him "Despair and die, Richard," got plenty of oomph from projection of the outlines of the ghosts on a screen. The climactic fight, in which Richard lost his horse, his kingdom, and his life, was superbly choreographed. The Duke of Richmond engaged him with the sword, and when one blade broke and the other was lost, he closed with the evil king, wrestled him to the ground, and knifed him.

They well knew the play was a propaganda piece, about as accurate as a bio of Nicholas II might have been, as penned by Lenin. But it was a grand drama, and it left them both heartily in favor of the gallant Welsh duke who would become Henry VII. Through it all, they sat hand in hand, neither stealing a kiss. That was Dyanne's way, in public. Even so, she packed a lot of power into handholding, far more than any of his high-school sweethearts had ever managed with groping and kisses. He wondered how she did it.

She insisted they return home via his dorm for a rerun of the previous night's festivities. Only this time, Crazy Susan was on the air, and there would be no interruptions for cuing up music, doing newscasts, or anything else. All Ian did with the radio was listen to his roomie's show, "The Million Year Picnic." During a particularly intense kiss, he thought he heard Dyanne's voice again, at her softest and sexiest: "*When I marry you, you'll be part of me, and nothing will ever separate us.*" Again, he wrote it off to his overactive imagination. There was no way she could have said anything with her mouth too busy for speech.



Much of Monday afternoon was occupied by a skull session in the computer lab, involving Ian, five other advanced students, and Dr. Thompson, the only math prof who knew how to make a computer say "Uncle." From out of nowhere, someone donated a complete DEC PDP-11/20 to the school, the latest in what were called "mini-computers." Nobody, not even Dr. Thompson, knew anything about the system, and the week's on-site training left the professor with more unanswered questions than he started with. Along with its traditional operating system, it came with something called "Unix," which nobody had ever heard of. The DEC representative had said it was an experimental system from Bell Labs, but that for best results, they should use the traditional DEC operating system. One of the students quipped that its secret was really a *castrato* hiding in the cabinet, singing soprano and flipping hidden switches.

Ian figured out how to make the computer print long banners using fanfold paper, and composed one to be sent to the mysterious donor: "DEAR MR. OR MRS. ANONYMOUS, THANK YOU FOR THE GIFT OF THE DEC PDP-11. THE SANFORD COLLEGE MATH DEPARTMENT WILL PUT IT TO GOOD USE FOR YEARS TO COME. SINCERELY, DR. THOMPSON AND THE ADVANCED COMPUTING STUDENTS OF SANFORD COLLEGE." The Board of Trustees, the only ones who knew where the gift came from, would forward it to the donor.

That had gone in last week. Today there was a problem that was stopping everything, and Dr. Thompson was annoyed. No one claimed to know why, when starting up under Unix, the thing halted and printed out a nonsense line: "YOU NEED LITTLE, TEENY EYES FOR READING LITTLE TEENY PRINT LIKE YOU NEED LITTLE TEENY HANDS FOR MILKING MICE." A soft reset produced a nearly identical line, only it now spoke of little, teeny shoes for centipedes. Subsequent resets mentioned little teeny license plates for bees, little branding irons for branding ants, and finally "little, teeny

hooks for microfiche.” After that, it printed “HI, PAL! YOU HAVE BEEN HACKED BY HERMES! HAVE FUN!” Then it booted normally.

Two hours’ hunt by Ian and Dr. Thompson found the kernel, or down-deep unconscious mind, of the Unix operating system to be larger than it was supposed to be. The difference, on disassembly, lay in the code producing the offending messages, plus a timer to produce the delayed-action effect (this had not happened until today). Whoever programmed the prank was thoughtful enough to bracket their intrusion with comments—it was easy enough to comment the whole mess out, document the changes, and recompile the kernel.

Once the PDP was back to booting in the usual way, Ian wondered who this “Hermes” clown was. His main recollection of that name was attached to the Greek trickster god, customarily associated with commerce, theft, travel, and falsehood. As it was, “Hermes” had swiped lines from a song Ian heard at a science fiction convention, one written by a fan named Tom Digby with an extra verse from one Lee Gold.

Ian was thankful the phony god had merely been a jester, not a wrecker. Dr. Thompson had spoken of a new idea of computers communicating with one another in a network mediated by the telephone lines—if a program intended to do harm to systems, or steal data, or commit some other mayhem got around in such a network, that meant big trouble. He hoped someone out there was thinking about these things.

This interlude nearly made Ian late for his daily piano practice session at the conservatory. As he worked through a Mozart piece in a practice room, he wished for the thousandth time that good music would come to him naturally. On most days, he managed at least an hour of solid practice, sometimes two, but he never seemed to get beyond the half-polish of a fifth-year student.

He dived into a couple of Bach’s “Two-part Inventions,” knowing he could pass Intermediate Piano, but wanting better. *Why can’t I have the family musical talents? Why did they skip over me? Dad’s a terrific banjo-picker; he could make a good living doing that, if he didn’t have a whole navy to look after. And Mom’s the cantor at our church! Organ or piano, she can play anything—hell, she can do anything J.S. Bach could do in a church, except compose. And Eloise is damned good on a piano, too. Why not me?*

His frustration at his lack of piano talent—he wanted to become a virtuoso someday—was matched by Susan’s frustration at not being able to sing opera, or much of anything else. She had a pleasant speaking voice, one of KSCW’s best for radio announcing, but her singing, despite voice lessons, was subpar, just like Ian’s piano playing. At least she had her drums, on which she excelled.

He switched to Schubert’s “Marche Militaire,” and recalled a radio play from childhood: “Sparky’s Magic Piano.” In that one, a kid who didn’t like piano lessons—hard to imagine that—suddenly got a magic piano that would play anything for him, virtuoso-grade, as long as he randomly ran his fingers over the keys. Of course, the spell didn’t last much longer than Cinderella’s, and then the kid woke up from his dream. But he didn’t really want Sparky’s piano, he wanted talent—couple that with his work habits, and he’d make virtuoso. *Golden talent—with fingers and feet to work it—and I wouldn’t care what package it came in! I’d practice my way to Carnegie Hall!*

Finally, he tramped up to the KSCW studio. He checked in several times a week, in case something had gone haywire, or the station management was

ringing in a new round of changes. This early in the game, the only thing constant about KSCW was its state of flux.

When he came in, Hulda the Valkyrie was in the booth doing her classical show. Unlike Sufferin' Gary, she made classical music sound like fun with her Top-40 DJ approach to the genre. From where he stood, he saw something was missing from the booth. In the teletype room sat Tori Towers, the station's lanky chief engineer, scribbling on something.

"Tori, where's the Revox?" asked Ian, as he sat down across from him.

"It got ripped off last night. I'm filling out the police paperwork on it."

"You're kidding! We took precautions with that thing!" They had. Tori marked every metal surface with a scribe saying, "Property of KSCW-FM," and the station's address. Ian then chained it down with a heavy-duty bicycle lock.

"Somebody unlocked the station sometime after sign-off, took a hacksaw to your lock, and waltzed off with the deck. Cops think it was an inside job—not inside the station, but inside the SUB."

"Who did sign-off last night?"

"Groovy Stu. He's furious. He and his dad went halves to buy us that deck."

"Gawd," said Ian. "I wonder how they're gonna fence it."

"Out of state. Prevention's in order—I'm sketching out a design for a burglar alarm system."

Dyanne swept into the station, resplendent in one of her pink day-dresses. "Oh, Ian, I knew I'd find you here," she said. "Why the long faces?"

Ian told her of the theft. "Why, that's so rotten!" she exclaimed. Then a light came into her eyes. "Stay put, boys. Don't go anywhere." Then she disappeared out the door.

"I wonder what that's all about," said Tori.

"Beats me," said Ian. "When she gets that look in her eyes, anything can happen."

They sat, sketching circuit diagrams and arguing about the proposed burglar alarm. Then, around an hour before supper, Dyanne burst back into the studio, followed by Ellie pushing a hand truck. On it were two large boxes that said TEAC on them.

"I have a solution to your troubles," she said sweetly.

"Are those tape decks?" Ian asked.

"Darling, the other day, we were down at Just Listen, when you asked about a new amplifier for your system. I remembered seeing those tape decks there, so when you lost that one deck, I thought I'd buy you two. I know they aren't the same, but I hope they'll do."

"You deserve a big one," said Ian. For once, he was quicker on the draw than Dyanne. He hopped up, embraced her in a gentle hug, and gave her a big smack, right on the lips. She returned it, and for several seconds, all was silent.

Tori waited until they disengaged. "Dyanne, those decks are the only two of their kind in town just now, at least that were for sale. There's gonna be a few peeved stereo buffs around here. These just happen to be top-of-the-line TEACs. They even take the same ten-inch reels the Revox did, as well as all the smaller sizes. I don't know how to thank you."

"You both just did," said Dyanne.

"How did you swing those decks?" asked Ian.

“I wrote a check. First, I called Just Listen to make sure they were still there, and then went down and bought them.”

“Dyanne Waters, I hereby name you the Official Fairy Godmother of KSCW,” said Tori. “We’ll have to put it through the policy council, but I’m sure it’ll pass unanimously with a loud shout.”

“One thing, Tori. When you make her certificate to put on the wall with all of our licenses, make sure her name reads ‘Dyanne Waters, a.k.a. Dyanne the Beautiful.’”

“Can do. In the meantime, let’s get those decks over to my room, where I can lock them up tight. Nobody knows about them but us. The rack cabinet we were gonna put the Revox in arrives Thursday. Once we bolt them into that, they won’t be going anywhere—Torx-head bolts.”

It looked to Ian that Dyanne’s impulsiveness had resurfaced in a grand manner, just when he thought her actions had become easy to guess—her kissing was as predictable as Ohm’s Law.



FIELD to HQ: Dyanne awakens.

### 3: Hysterical Research

The rack cabinet was only half-ready by Friday night, despite Tori's and Ian's best efforts, plus those of a couple of other fellows who spoke solder fluently. Ian set down his knapsack full of LPs, logged the transmitter meters, and organized himself to take the midnight handoff from Albert "Chairman" Chow.

"Ian, where are the tape decks?" asked Dyanne.

"In a safe place," said Ian.

"Hey, shut up, I'm going live," said the Chairman. The light went on, he went through his closing routine, and he yielded his seat to Ian.

Once the Chairman left, Dyanne snuggled into his lap. "Can you please tone it down this time?" he asked. "I screwed up three program log entries last week. Groovy Stu—Program Director—was wondering what had gotten into me. Ditto Bob Sears, our manager."

"Oh, all right. I don't want you to get in Dutch with the station management. But what did happen to the tape decks?"

"Well, you can see the rack's half full of stuff mounted in it. We aren't done yet; everything's by the book, no shortcuts. I never do a half-assed job of anything, and Tori's the same way. We had a lot of fun wiring up a couple of the patch-panels. Then there are the remote switching arrangements for all the tape gear, not just your open-reel gifts. We have three cartridge machines for short items, like canned station breaks and public service announcements. We also installed remote switches for the turntables."

"Is that so you can run everything from the control board?"

"Yep. You recall I've sometimes been busier than a one-armed paper hanger in here. Now I won't have to reach here and there all the time, just to start something."

"That cabinet isn't the right color to go with the new decks, or the stuff that's already in it," said Dyanne.

"Why should I care what color it is? I'm not a girl!"

"Are the two big gaps in the cabinet where the decks will go?"

“You got it. A minute, please. Watch the switch bank in front of the control board.” He announced the next tune and started it running without even looking at the turntable, much less touching it. He doffed his headphones and hung them on their peg by the control board before Dyanne could reach them.

“I suppose this station is like Rome. It wasn’t built in a day,” said Dyanne. She gave him a long, pleasant kiss. *“I wish that jerk would lay off Ian! Without him, Sanford College wouldn’t have a radio station at all!”*

“Huh?” said Ian, as their lips parted. Funny, he thought he heard Dyanne say something while they were kissing, again. Her voice was right between his ears.

“Dear?” said Dyanne.

“Did you say something?”

“I didn’t say anything. We were kissing. What did you think I said?”

“Well, Groovy Stu isn’t a jerk,” said Ian, “and I’m not indispensable to KSCW. It’s taken all of us to get this contraption on the air.”

“Why—darling, I was thinking that, and almost saying it, but I certainly wasn’t about to say it out loud! Can you read minds?”

“No. It was more like I heard you say something. You weren’t very quiet about it, either.”

Then Ian heard another voice, this one male, and not one he recognized. *“CQ, CQ, CQ. CQ Ian McDonald. This is N-Key. Please respond. Over.”* It sounded staticky, like a distant ham radio transmission near the limits of reception. *“CQ, CQ Ian McDonald. Please respond. This is N-Key. Over.”* He was used to hearing voices in his head, saying things like “CQ,” whenever he operated his ham station. Headphones placed the voices between his ears. Only now, his headphones rested on their peg. He picked them up, listening to one earphone and then the other. Music only, no static, no voice. He hung them back up.

“Dear, you look so—blank,” said Dyanne.

“Uh, I’m getting another voice, not yours—oh, hell!” The current song was within seconds of ending. Ian grabbed for an album, any album, cued up its longest song, and threw the switches just in time.

“Okay. It was a male voice, and he wasn’t very easy to hear. Someone calling himself N. Key. Oh, there he goes again.”

*“CQ, CQ Ian McDonald. Please respond. This is N-Key. Over.”* The only male voice in the studio was his own—the Chairman was long gone—and the phones remained on their peg. The control board’s meters showed perfectly normal readings—voice-over atop music always produced meter-kicks. Could this be—telepathy?

Taking his mouth out of gear, Ian tried to think back at whoever it might be. *“This is Ian McDonald, responding to N-Key. Over.”* He glanced at the mike and the “On the Air” light—they were dead off. It wouldn’t do to accidentally broadcast any of this, as the FCC frowned upon using a broadcast station for two-way wireless communications.

*“Thank you, Ian. Not N-Key. Enki. My name is Enki. Over.”*

*“Enki, then. Is this telepathy?”* Ian thought at the strange voice. Best to act as if this were real for now, and pick it apart later. He hoped it *was* telepathy. If it wasn’t, he was hearing nonexistent things—meaning the semester’s stress was driving him bananas.

"Yes, it is."

"I think I just picked up a thought from my girlfriend, who is here with me, just before you called me."

"Oh," thought Enki. There was much static-sounding noise. "*She needs better control. Tell her to contact Inanna.*"

"QRM in your signal. Who is Inanna?"

"Link is difficult, just yet. You need much practice. Inanna is my daughter. Look up Sumer." There was another big burst of static. "I think we should sign off."

"Tan out."

"Enki out." Telepathy?! He'd worked with just about every mode of communication there was, except for that new, computer-to-computer method Dr. Thompson talked about, called "ARPANET." It figured that, if there were anything to the idea of telepathy, he would run into it. He'd read about it often enough; it was a science fiction staple, and the McDonald household was full of such books and magazines. Dad had developed a taste for it during the war. It was hard to see how he could've avoided that, given that he had Robert Heinlein and Edgar Rice Burroughs for shipmates. Ian inherited his dad's taste.

That is, in Burroughs's fiction. The man was a war correspondent—Ian thought *The Invisible Armada*, *Retreat to Mindanao*, and *Swords Over Tokyo* were even more exciting than Barsoom or Pellucidar, while his father complained the guy overdramatized everything in general and overinflated his own role in particular.

Heinlein, normally the antithesis of Burroughs, used telepathy frequently in his stories. Come to think of it, the Heinleins, whom Ian had known as "Uncle Bob and Aunt Leslyn" since he was a toddler, claimed to be telepathic themselves. Maybe there was something to this.

"I've—just had a telepathic conversation," said Ian. "It was a lot like ham radio, complete with rotten reception."

"It's real, then," said Dyanne. "I haven't been imagining things."

"Have you—been hearing people in your head, too?"

"Yes, dear. For the last week or so. But it wasn't anyone named N-Key." So, Dyanne had been doing this, too. How strange this all was! And he'd come up to the station expecting to do a normal radio show.

"Enki, actually. He told me you should be contacting someone. Why don't we each write down the name of your, I guess, contact?"

"Good idea." They did so, and then compared notes.

"Inanna!" they both said aloud.

"I suppose we have to assume there's something to this," said Ian. "Much as I don't care to."

"You're quite the college hippie. You mean you don't go in for all the New Age stuff they're always going on about?"

"Nope." Ian's mind was mixed. On the one hand, this was New Age bullshit. On the other, it was a science fiction adventure story. Only he wasn't reading it, he was living it. One positive thing, though—the whole business got Dyanne sidetracked from her torrid version of necking.

It also got him sidetracked from doing his show. The latest song had less than a minute to go. He hurriedly cued up another long number (which even happened to segue well with the last one), went live to announce it, and completed the transition.

“Enki told you I needed to contact Inanna?” asked Dyanne. “Any idea why?”

“Control problems. You say things to me mentally when you don’t intend to. I don’t think you want to do that.”

“You’re right. I don’t. How do I contact her? So far, she’s always opened the conversation.”

“Try thinking ‘CQ Inanna. CQ Inanna. This is Dyanne Waters. Please respond. Over.’ That was how Enki got in touch with me.”

“What’s CQ mean?”

“It’s radio jargon meaning you’re trying to contact someone. CQ— ‘Seek you.’”

“That’s certainly clever,” said Dyanne. “I think I want to sit in the guest chair to try this, rather than in your lap, if you don’t mind.”

“Suits me.”

Dyanne sat for most of an hour, a distracted expression on her face. She was still in her trance, or whatever it was, when Ian did his rip-and-read. The big news was the Brooklyn Dodgers winning the World Series in Game Six. Fidel Castro was well-known for his quotable sayings, almost as much as his Bronx rival, Yogi Berra. When presented with the World Series trophy, he said, “I didn’t win this trophy. All the Dodgers did. I’ll always be a Dodger—if you cut me, I bleed Dodger Blue.”

The other stories were more world tensions. In the past few days, the Red Chinese once again threatened to cross the Yalu and invade Korea. Today, the UN Security Council passed a resolution condemning the People’s Republic of China, backed by both the US and the Soviet Union. It appeared that Russia didn’t want China to get any stronger than she already was.

The mess in Indonesia had gotten even worse. Chairman Soekarno took over most of the city of Surabaya, only to find himself besieged in turn by the KNIL, or Royal Dutch Army of the Indies. Ho Chi Minh and Duong Van Minh, dual heads of the coalition government of Vietnam, expressed their support for Soekarno, along with condemnation of the Dutch, but had so far sent no money or arms. Ian hoped the situation would not get so out of hand as to directly involve either of the Cold War rivals. Why the devil did half the freedom fighters in the world have to be Communists? America and Russia, not to mention Japan and Europe, had enjoyed a quarter century of peace since 1945. He and his father both wanted it to stay that way.

That English volcano had calmed down again, and was no longer even steaming. No casualties reported.

Dyanne returned to awareness of the world shortly after he finished his newscast. Ian was beginning to miss her presence in his lap. “I—I think I’m back,” she said.

“Are you okay?”

“I feel fine, if a little tired. Can you sign off at your usual time, and not run later? I don’t think I can keep awake later than that.”

“Sure. Get through?” Good. Dyanne was tired, but nothing worse than that.

“I certainly did! Ian, you should get to know Inanna. I only thought she was a nice lady before, but now I’m thoroughly convinced. Friendly, helpful, kind, and as wise as an old professor. She helped me through a lot. We broke contact

twice, and I re-made it both times. She says you need to get in touch with Enki again.”

“Not tonight. On duty.”

“Tomorrow night, then. After we go to dinner and see *Richard III* again. Instead of playing games in your room, we get serious—I’ll contact Inanna again, while you try to contact Enki.”

“Fine with me,” said Ian. “About dinner—”

“Let’s keep it simple. We go casual and Dutch to the Red Apple Café, and then to the play. I’ll even let you take me out in your Bug.”

“Thanks. Funniest thing, ‘Bug’ used to be short for ‘Bugatti,’ which was one fancy make of car. Now, it means ‘Volkswagen Beetle,’ which is anything but.”

“I know about Bugattis. My mother owns one. It’s stored in the back of the garage, and we take it out a few times a year. Grandfather bought it during the Depression, when we had money and a lot of people didn’t. It was around the same time he sank half our money into a struggling airplane company.”

“Hope he didn’t go broke.”

“My mother was scared. Grandmother thought he was nuts. Funny thing was, Grandfather wasn’t usually a gambler, which was why we still had money after 1929. He said the investment was a sure thing, and by George, it was. Only he died before he could see his sure thing pay off big.”

“What company?” Ian was genuinely curious. He liked airplanes; it was his father who hated riding in them. He thought he knew most of the obscure little aircraft manufacturers from the early days; “Uncle Erwin” always had a lot to say about them, anytime he came by to visit.

“Boeing.”

“Your family doesn’t do things by halves.”

“That’s why the family business is philanthropy. When I bought those tape decks for your station, I was doing what my mother does all the time. The station is sponsored by Sanford College, which is an educational institution. Donations are tax-deductible. Believe me, she did not squawk about that when I told her what I’d done. Instead, she told me I’d done just the right thing. But, you know, I would have done it anyway, even if she hadn’t approved.”

“Dyanne, you are one sweet girl,” said Ian.

“Thank you. On the telepathy business, do you want me to try to get in touch with you that way now?”

“I’d rather wait. Was she able to do anything about your mental open-mike problem?”

“It turned out to be trivial. Inanna showed me where the switch was, at least that’s the way she taught me to visualize it. The switch always remains off, unless I consciously decide to transmit. She also doesn’t think I’ll be able to transmit to anyone but you for a long time to come. That is, apart from her and Enki.”

“Sounds good. It even makes sense,” said Ian.

Shortly after that, Dyanne snored in his lap. Whatever else telepathy did, it used up energy. His own brief talk with Enki had taken something out of him; Dyanne had been involved with Inanna for a long time. The simple fact of his girlfriend’s fatigue was proof of energy loss going somewhere; telepathy evidently had physical side-effects.

This was comforting. Simple imaginings didn't tire a man out, not unless he tried to put them onto paper as a coherent story (something Ian was incapable of, anyhow). Hard mental labor was another matter. Everyone at Sanford was familiar with that, and Dyanne was sleeping like she'd done several hours of intense studying. What he'd seen her do looked more like some sort of meditative trance, and meditation was supposed to pick you up, not wear you out.

Anything that tired Dyanne out during a radio show was a positive, in his book. This hadn't been of any concern during their freshman year, but nowadays, he was on duty one night a week, at a minimum. The first few times he'd had her company in the booth had been novel and fun, but last week was too much. He made a mental note to never attempt telepathy while on duty, though. It wouldn't do for him to doze off at the controls.

There was also that odd bit about Boeing. He knew enough of his aviation history to know that company hit rock bottom in 1935, when Bill Boeing bet the firm on the Model 299, a gigantic machine nicknamed "The Flying Fortress" by a local newsmen. When the prototype crashed during formal acceptance trials, throwing the heavy-bomber contract to Douglas, only an infusion of new investment kept Boeing Aviation above water long enough to weather the crisis. The Army then let a developmental contract to Boeing despite the crash, in case this "Flying Fortress" amounted to anything. Some years later, Hitler and Tojo heartily wished the Boeing firm had been allowed to sink without a trace. No wonder the Waters family was rich!

Ian continued to spin platters calmly and deftly as Dyanne continued to snore. He woke her just prior to signoff, when he played "Hope Eyrie." She loved that song almost as much as he did, and he didn't want her to miss it.



Saturday afternoon, Ian poked his nose into the Penrose Library to look up a thing or two. The names "Enki" and "Inanna" puzzled him. He thought he'd heard of them before, but he wasn't sure where. There was a key: Sumer.

From his Ancient Civilizations class his freshman year, he recalled that Sumer was the name given to Mesopotamia (or Iraq) prior to the ascendancy of Babylon. It was a loose collection of independent city-states with peculiar names like Ur, Eridu, Kish, Lagash, and Uruk. There was once a legendary king of Sumer named Gilgamesh. This was enough of a clue to guide his search.

Three hours of stiff library work yielded some information on the two mysterious names. "Enki" was the name of the Sumerian god of water and wisdom. He had a granddaughter named "Inanna," who was goddess of both love and war. Later, in Babylon, Inanna was known as Ishtar. In traveling to Babylon, she also handed off her stewardship of war to her brother, Nergal. It was unclear what name Enki was known by in Babylon; it might have been Marduk. Much later, according to some scholarly speculations, Marduk and Ishtar (now father and daughter) wormed their way into the Hebrew scriptures under the names of Mordecai and Esther.

The vagueness of this information bothered Ian. This was the main reason he hadn't paid much attention to the early phases of his Ancient Civilizations class. He preferred the parts about Greece and Rome, which were full of definite names, dates, and documented events. A man could get his teeth into such solid things, while the most ancient times were filled with airy speculations, mostly based on meager collections of clues dug up by archeologists.

That reminded him of the latest goings-on in the computer lab. Of all Dr. Thompson's advanced students, he came closest to understanding what Unix was all about. He and Thompson had running arguments about the meaning of the meager collection of notes and helpful hints that amounted to the system's documentation. Unix came with a brand-new language, simply called C, which appeared to be something like assembler, something like FORTRAN, and something like nothing he'd ever seen before. There was a new idea in it, called pointers, which promised a great deal of versatility—if he could discover how to use them safely. The two programs he'd written using pointers that week both goaded the PDP into doing a “fandango on core,” requiring a system reset.

One thing C didn't resemble in the slightest was COBOL, which Ian thought was a major positive feature. COBOL was messy, verbose, ugly, and oriented towards bookkeeping. It was utterly useless for scientific, engineering, or mathematical purposes. Worse yet, it was designed by a committee headed by a woman.

At Sanford, and everywhere else he'd heard of, women were great in the humanities and social “sciences.” Few had the ability to handle the real sciences—and when they did, the result was likely to be a grand mess like COBOL. Oh, there was Dr. Kate Brontë, the astronomy professor, but her department offered no majors. He'd noticed that, in his freshman physics and calculus classes, there was a goodly sprinkling of girls (Dyanne managed to tough it through Freshman Calc, for example), but come his sophomore year, this dropped to two girls in Vector Calculus and none at all in Quantum Mechanics. The higher-level math and physics classes were all stag parties.

Casual dates with Dyanne were as much fun as the formal ones. She wore one of her spiffy day-dresses (Ian wondered whether she even owned a pair of pants, much less wore any), while Ian replaced last week's tux with blue jeans, sneakers, and a brand-new “KSCW—Stereo Giant” T-shirt. *Richard III* was even better the second time around.

But this date was tense. Normally, tension during a date, unless the couple was having a rocky time of it, meant one or both partners was seriously thinking about getting laid. Tonight, it was something else entirely. Ian and Dyanne were contemplating practicing telepathy from a cold start.

Once Crazy Susan was off to do her show, they sat down on Ian's bed. “Well,” said Dyanne, “do you want me to try to contact you?”

“Might as well. I don't know how, but I'll try to be all ears.”

Dyanne then looked distracted, and Ian heard a very scratchy voice in his head. “*CQ Ian, CQ Ian, CQ Ian. Do you read me, darling? Please respond. Over.*” There was much static, more so than in his short talk with Enki the night before.

“*Dyanne, this is Ian. QRM. I can hear you, sort of. I repeat, QRM. Over.*”

“*I hear you, Ian.*” There was a long burst of loud static. “*—RM is? Over.*”

“*Dyanne, much too much QRM. I'm going vocal. Ian out.*”

More static. “—*ane out.*”

It worked! Ian was pleasantly surprised. Yes, the connection was a mess. But it was a connection! Whatever this was, it could be repeated, which was very important to him.

“Looks like you got through to me,” he said.

“You sounded just fine. Clear as a bell, all the way through. You kept saying something about QRM. What’s that?” asked Dyanne.

“Ham shorthand for interference. Your signal was cram-full of static.” Ian didn’t think telepathy had anything to do with electricity, but the interference sounded like static.

“Oh. Of course. Last night, I had a long session with Inanna, but you only had a short chat with Enki. If you have a long one with him tonight, perhaps you can get rid of that static. Speaking of Inanna and Enki, did you find out anything about them yet?”

Ian recounted his frustrating afternoon’s research.

“So, we really don’t know much about them, at least not yet,” said Dyanne.

“That’s about it. I figure they just assumed the two names.”

“To what purpose?”

“Beats me. One thing, though. If they try laying any ‘Esoteric Secret Wisdom of the Ancients’ on me, I’ll sign off and stay signed off.”

“Ian! That’s not nice. Besides, Inanna did no such thing. If she was pushing anything other than ‘How to use your new telepathic faculty,’ it was ‘Practical Wisdom of the Moderns.’ So you really ought to try getting through to Enki.”

“I’ll give it a try.”

“I’ll stay behind and keep an eye on you, just in case. I think that, for now, we should do things that way. You sat anchor for me last night. Tonight, I sit anchor for you. Last night, I got really tired out. It wouldn’t do if we both got pooped out at the same time.” Dyanne took his hand.

“Thanks. Here goes.”

“*CQ Enki, CQ Enki. This is Ian. Please respond. Over,*” he began.

“*Ian, this is Enki,*” came the reply, after his third repetition. “*Your signal is scratchy, although it sounds a bit better than last night. You require instruction, and I will give it to you. Do you feel ready?*”

“*Not really. But I’m willing to try. This is all new to me.*”

“*I understand. You are a skeptic. That is a healthy attitude, as long as you are willing to accept new information and evaluate it,*” said Enki.

“*Let’s begin, then.*” What followed surprised him. Instead of giving him phony Oriental New Age blather, Enki (whoever he really was) led him through some neat, orderly exercises, at the end of which he could converse with Enki with no static interference at all. Then Enki invited him into fuller contact with him, and he found he could see the fellow. Enki looked just like the picture of a Sumerian king: sandals, flounced skirt, a few ornaments, a sword-belt, and his hair and beard dressed in sausage curls. Incongruously, the man had a slide rule in his hand, rather than the measuring rod and line the king in the book illustration had held. Ian wasn’t sure he could see himself, but that didn’t seem to matter. Around both of them was a neat, orderly electronics lab.

*"Welcome to my mental place of instruction,"* said Enki. *"You are now in as full a rapport with me as is wise for a beginning pupil. I perceive you are comfortable in here. There is much I need to show you."*

*"Did Dyanne see something like this? She'd be lost in this lab."*

*"No. Inanna has made a place that suits her. Now, this device controls mental transmission,"* the king said, pointing to a case with knobs and meters in a rack cabinet.

Ian wasn't sure how long he and Enki worked together in the laboratory. Enki's manner reminded him of Dr. Thompson, the man who was likely to become his faculty advisor when he formally declared his major. Thompson used discussion more than lecture, which suited Ian. The big difference between the two instructors was that Enki clearly knew all about telepathy, while Thompson's knowledge of computers was a mixture of solid knowledge and educated guesswork, especially where the new PDP-11 was concerned.

*"I think it is time to end the session,"* said Enki, after Ian finally demonstrated he could, indeed, close contact with Enki, reopen it, and find his way back to the lab. *"You are tiring. As a last exercise, I want you to contact Dyanne."*

*"Is there any way to do telepathy without getting tired?"*

*"There is, but neither you nor Dyanne are yet ready for it. If I were to try to teach it to you now, you would reject it as 'Eastern mystic baloney.' When the time is ripe, that information will fit. It will be part of a logical progression."*

*"I think I see."*

*"Contact me again in a week. Now that you know how, I will not try to call you at an awkward time."*

*"In the middle of my show was really that."*

*"You were more open then than you usually are,"* Enki explained. *"So, next week, or whenever you and Dyanne feel up to it. Enki out."*

*"Ian out."*

It was real. Through his fatigue, Ian felt happy, almost elated. This was not what he feared, some kind of mysterious séance with a balmy swami. It was more like meeting Mentor of Arisia in the Lensman books. He realized his eyes were closed, but he wasn't asleep. Then he remembered Enki's last instruction, visualized the mental transmitter, and switched it on. *"CQ Dyanne, CQ Dyanne. This is Ian. Please respond. Over."*

*"Oh, Ian! You're back! How was it with Enki?"*

*"Just fine. I learned a lot. Oh, good. No QRM."*

*"That's wonderful!"*

*"I'm tired. Ian out."*

*"I love you, dear. Dyanne out."*

"I'd better get you home," said Ian, once he could see Dyanne again. She was right next to him, her hand in his, where it probably had been the whole time he was out of touch with the world.

"Tired?"

"Very."

On the way back to her house, he muzzily thought about his girlfriend. He couldn't get along at all without her. He remembered to check his mental transmitter. It was switched dead off. Someday, he had to marry her. Dad would shake his hand and slap his back, Mom would have a crying fit, but what would

Dyanne's rich-as-Croesus mother think of a match with a Navy brat from Bremerton? She and Mom were old friends, but would that cut any ice? He'd met her—Mom had her over on occasion—but she'd been this top-lofty, stuffy lady whom he'd always been carefully polite to.

Dyanne banished his doubts with a long, delicious goodnight kiss. As he staggered back to Balmer Hall, he knew he'd always be with Dyanne, and they now shared something few lovers did. The fearsome confrontation with the formidable Mrs. Waters could wait.



FIELD to HQ: Both parties are now active.

HQ to FIELD: Remain in place. Mind your cover.

## 4: A Coven of Warlocks

The remainder of October was a blur. Between classwork, the radio station, the PDP, and Dyanne, Ian had little time to think about anything else. Upcoming was Homecoming, with its attendant dance and football fiasco, er, game. He planned to take Dyanne to both, partly for old time's sake, and partly because the Warlocks were making a return trip to Sanford.

Last year, he hadn't begun by taking Dyanne out anywhere. He'd known her as long as he'd known Susan; whenever Dyanne's mother crossed the Puget Sound for a visit, she brought Dyanne along, as well as Susan during the couple of weeks each summer when the Coolidges weren't Mom's guests. He and Dyanne had never gotten along at all.

That girl was forever snooty and stuck-up, while Susie was always friendly and nice. It didn't help that Susan was prettier, in a very girly way, and that ran from toddlers to teen years. He'd always loved how both girls dressed—his preference, gained from watching Mom and Eloise, was for lots of ruffles, lace, and petticoats. Around twelve, he added to that high heels, huge, stiff hairdos, and lots of makeup. Susan carried that look off better than Dyanne, never mind she'd grown from a chubby little girl to a Rubenesque young lady.

When they started college, Dyanne was still stuck-up and less attractive than Susan. Ian didn't give her a second thought.

He knew Susie wasn't girlfriend material, but he wanted to take *someone* out to the Homecoming football game and dance—his favorite rock band, the Warlocks, would be playing. So he asked her.

"It's very sweet of you," said Susan, "but I really must say no. Too many guys around here know what I really am, and that would make you look, well, gay. Besides, although I know sparks have sometimes jumped between us, it's always been from the juice getting out of hand while doing electrical projects together."

"You got me there," he said, rather crestfallen.

"Why don't you ask Dyanne out?"

"Uh—because we've never gotten along. She's so snooty."

“She’s always nice to me. And she’s lonely.”

He thought that served her right for being so toplofty. “Well . . .”

“Just waltz right across the street to her house and ask her,” Susan suggested. She looked up at him and smiled. “Don’t worry, she really doesn’t bite.”

“But don’t you want to see the Warlocks? I know you like them.”

“I already have a ticket.”

And so, Ian concealed his trepidation and asked Dyanne out to Homecoming.

She surprised him by accepting, and she was actually charming about it! He thought it must have had something to do with her being a debutante the previous summer—he’d managed to beg off from attending any of those social functions himself, although his mother and sister went. Instead, he launched rockets, did electronics work, and watched *Star Trek* with Susan, who was totally uninterested in boys.

The couple of pleasant chats he had with Dyanne offset the storm that rained down on him in the dorm. He hadn’t given a thought to her sorority affiliation—she was an Alpha Phi pledge. He knew nothing of the Greek groups, as he was a “Gamma Delta Iota,” or “God Damned Indie.”

Shucks, he hadn’t even gone through Rush Week, preferring science fiction novels to puerile silliness. Susan had done the same—as an anatomical male, she was barred from the sororities, and she obviously wouldn’t fit on Frat Row, either. So, they spent several days knitting and gabbing together prior to the start of classes—Ian was an inveterate knitter and a passable tailor.

The Alpha Phis were stuck-up, according to Jim Fielding, a dorm neighbor, who also told him the second letter in the group’s name was pronounced “fee,” rather than “fie,” because it took a fee for a guy to be considered for a date with one of those girls. The self-styled wit (Ian figured he was half-right) then warned him, “You mean you’re gonna go out with one of them Aphids? Man, you gotta be nuts! None of them bitches will spread ’em for anybody—except each other. Didn’t anybody tell you the Aphids are all dykes?”

Ian didn’t give a damn. Although he’d gone steady a couple of times in high school, “spread ’em” wasn’t high on his list. According to his father, you got laid after you got serious with a girl, not before. This sixteenth-birthday advice accompanied a box of condoms—which Ian had yet to get serious enough to use.

Ian took the prettiest chick in the Alpha Phis out to Homecoming. Throughout the football game they chatted—he’d forgotten she was fond of science fiction—and that banished all thought of the mayhem on the field. This was just as well, as Sanford was the conference doormat.

The one disappointing thing about Dyanne was that she couldn’t sew, knit, crochet, or do any other kind of needlework. Just as well he had Susie to share that with.

During the game, the awareness crept over him that he was with a girl he was really attracted to, which made him self-conscious and shy. He didn’t know what to do next. He was no stranger to necking sessions in his Volkswagen (not with Susan; they tried kissing once, but kissing her was like kissing Eloise), but this time was different. He played his gentleman to her lady, and they hadn’t so

much as touched when they went off to dinner and the dance—the Student Association hired the Warlocks to play.

Ian learned ballroom dancing from his mother and older sister—a requirement on the McDonalds’ social level. Although it sometimes seemed like something out of an old Fred Astaire movie, he much preferred it to the modern crazes. To him, those were calisthenics as a social function, and he was very much a non-athlete. He hoped Dyanne would be more interested in the music than in the dancing. He loved the Warlocks and listened to all five of their albums to the point of needing to replace the older ones.

The band opened with “The Golden Road,” an oldie of theirs, and Ian gyrated and flapped about randomly with Dyanne. During the second number, “Uncle John’s Band,” something happened to his date. During the first chorus, she stumbled. To keep her from going splat onto the floor, he reached out and steadied her.

Then he did not want to let go. Apparently, she did not want him to let go. In an awkward embrace, they sidled out of the action zone and sat down on the floor to one side, holding each other and watching the band, which they had ended up next to. No sooner were they seated, than she gave him the sweetest, longest, most torrid kiss he’d ever experienced. With heartfelt thanks, he returned her kiss. She did not want to let go. And he did not want her to let go. They sat through “Me and My Uncle,” a wild-west fable of two desperadoes, but when the band ambled into “Dark Star,” Dyanne said, “It’s a slow number. Let’s dance.”

It was during “Dark Star” he first said to her, “Dyanne the Beautiful.”

“Thank you, but I don’t *think* I look like a cave-woman from Pellucidar,” she said.

“That’s ‘Dian the Beautiful,’ different spelling. Her full dress is un-, while you dress up to your ears—apologies to Kipling.”

Twenty minutes of attempted foxtrot tired them—oddly, Dyanne seemed not to know the follow for that one, but danced wonderfully in the lead. Ian silently thanked his mother for teaching him both roles of all the standard ballroom dances. They found a vacant chair, again near the band. When Ian tried to be a gentleman and stand, Dyanne said, “No, you sit,” made herself comfortable in his lap, and kissed him. The rest of the world no longer existed for them; it was limited to Ian, Dyanne, and the Warlocks.

They sat there until around midnight, when the Warlocks played “In the Midnight Hour.” This was another long, slow number, with Pig Pen singing lead. Somewhere in the middle, he began a monologue, exhorting everyone to get up and dance. “Hey, you there, you handsome devil in the bell-bottoms! You with that pretty lady in your lap! Get up and dance with your girlfriend! She’ll love you for it!”

Ian asked, “Do you tango?” as the song sounded halfway appropriate for that.

“Yes!” Before Ian could do anything, she seized the lead, and he did his best to follow. The tango didn’t lend itself too well to improvisation, but he managed to keep up with Dyanne’s steps, putting in the showy jumps, twirls, and leg-kicks of the lady’s part where they belonged. It did help that his mother spent months teaching him to follow in the tango before ever letting him lead.

That he was taking the woman's part in the dance was probably lost on everyone there; most of the kids probably didn't know what "tango" meant. The guys he was working with to establish a radio station did—it was the letter in the phonetic alphabet between "Sierra" and "Uniform."

Even now, a year later, Ian was amazed by that first night. They ended up in a secluded gazebo in Pioneer Park, near the campus, where they pledged their love to each other.

The girl of his dreams—found so soon! He'd always wanted a girl like his mother and sister. And here she was, with her movie-star figure, her rustling skirts, her pale face nicely painted, and her delightful platinum-blonde hairdo—a sculpture with no curl out of place. She was so tiny and delicate, and yet she held him so firmly. Unlike his mother, she didn't talk all the time, and at the stroke of midnight, she didn't vanish.

He'd been in love before, or so he thought. But the girls of high school paled to invisibility before Dyanne the Beautiful.



This year's Homecoming was different. The Warlocks were returning, but for a three-day engagement, not a quick one-night gig. Friday night was a formal concert in Cordiner Hall, Sanford's new auditorium, which was reputed to have the best acoustics this side of San Francisco. Saturday night was a repeat of last year's dance, and Sunday afternoon would see a free, open-air concert. The college okayed that last, so long as no one publicized the fact of a free Warlocks concert. So, for a week beforehand, every DJ at the station (with the exception of Sufferin' Gary) hinted, "For a really fun time, show up in Ankeny Quad Sunday afternoon at one p.m."

When the Warlocks got to town on Thursday, they were royally entertained by everyone at KSCW, where they sat in on several shows. Ian was one of the hosts, and after an hour or two with them, they weren't big celebrities at all. They were just six regular guys who happened to be the best musicians since—Franz Liszt? Paganini? They were certainly equal to the Beatles, and they left Mick Jagger's Stones rolling in the dust. They didn't even get bothered at Ian's brusqueness Friday afternoon when Pig Pen asked, "What's this steel box on the wall?" and Ian answered, "New burglar alarm. Don't touch!" He and Tori had just finished wiring it up that morning.

That evening at the concert in Cordiner, Jerry Garza called several of the KSCW staff up onto the stage to be recognized, including Ian and Dyanne. While standing in front of everyone, Jerry formally presented Dyanne with a sash, sewn by Hulda the Valkyrie, proclaiming her "KSCW'S FAIRY GODMOTHER." She accepted this graciously, saying "But I didn't really do all that much," and wore it proudly, even though the tie-dye didn't go very well with her dress.

*Didn't do that much, my great-aunt Agnes, Ian thought. The twin TEACs aren't much? The bouncy cheerfulness she spreads around the station whenever she enters isn't much? Keeping the assistant engineer from going nuts isn't much?*

They had to leave the concert a little early so that Ian could do his scheduled Friday night show. As they stepped out the door, Ian heard the next number starting: “Lay down, my dear brothers . . .” That was “And We Bid You Goodnight,” a frequent closer the Warlocks used.

By arrangement with the band, KSCW ran a live broadcast feed of the concert, which Tori and two of the news staff set up, so the Chairman didn’t really miss the show. “Lost Planet Airman” was delayed until the Warlocks played through three encores.

Once the Chairman and Groovy Stu cleared out, and they had the station all to themselves, Dyanne decided to contact Inanna. “I’ll sit in your lap this time, and you can be my anchor,” she said.

“Of course,” was all he could say. After a long stretch, during which Ian skipped his rip-and-read (the big news already went out live, earlier), she came out of trance. “I’m back,” she said softly. “Inanna wants to speak to you.”

“Not here. Not now.”

“I understand—your show. But she needs to talk to you soon.”

“Maybe tomorrow night. Assuming I have any energy after the dance.”

“Of course. Last year’s dance was such a wonderful, delightful thing,” said Dyanne, yawning. “I’ll never forget it. That night, we became a couple.”

“You were sweet. You still are,” said Ian.

“And I’m sleepy again.” After that, Dyanne snored.

He woke her for signoff. “Dyanne, you need to get completely ready to leave. Once I arm the burglar alarm, we have sixty seconds to get out of the station and lock the door behind us.” Ian helped his girl into her fur coat, then put on his own jacket and shouldered his knapsack.

Dyanne watched curiously while he went through the arming routine. “And that’s the master switch,” he said as he set it.

“It didn’t stay put,” she said, reaching for it.

“DYANNE-DON’T-TOUCH-THAT!!!”

It was too late. She tried to set the switch herself, and it sprang back.

“Oh, shit,” he said. “Very shortly, the alarm will sound, unless Tori and I screwed up.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Just don’t touch things you don’t understand. I thought you knew that.”

The alarm sounded outside. It was a louder version of the noisy bell used to announce the scheduled end of class periods. *No*, Ian thought, *girls got no place working with high-tech gadgets like the stuff in this station. Well, most girls don’t. Susie’s a girl genius, and Hulda’s okay. But Dyanne ain’t a techie, never will be. Period.*

“Well, now I need to call Tori. And then I’d better call the cops. With any luck, Tori can locate the night watchman, who can cycle our circuit in the building’s breaker box.”

“Will that shut it off?”

“It should.”

“What was the matter with the switch?” asked Dyanne.

“It’s spring-loaded. That’s so a burglar can’t just switch the system off himself. Once armed, it stays armed until someone comes in with a studio key and disarms it. If it goes off, even that won’t do it.”

“I see. I really am sorry.”

“Water over the dam. Just don’t do it again,” said Ian, reaching for the telephone.



They skipped the football game. Tori and Susie needed skilled assistance setting up the live feed and recording gear for the dance, giving Ian an excellent excuse to miss an afternoon of boring embarrassment. This also meant he and Dyanne got to listen in on the Warlocks playing sound checks, and he also got a chance to watch professionals set up for a concert.

It was between sound check numbers that Jerry Garza drew Ian and Dyanne aside, while Tori was wrestling a borrowed tape deck. “I want you to know,” Jerry said, “that you guys are really cool. This is the farthest-out college we ever played at.”

“Why, thank you,” said Ian.

“We got fantastic tapes from last night. If tonight’s are as good, we got a double album, no sweat. Before we go, I want to talk to your station manager. You’d never guess the title I want for it.”

“*Warlocks Coven II?*” Dyanne asked.

“Man, it’s all over your guy’s T-shirt. *Stereo Giant of the Walla Walla Empire*. And I want your call letters on the cover.”

“Far out, man,” said Ian. “I’m sure Bob Sears will go for it.”

“There’s another thing, just for the two of you,” said Jerry. “We all noticed you last year. We noticed you a lot, man. You know, in the band, we talk about ‘The Magic.’ That’s when we start feeding vibes to the audience, and they feed vibes to us, and it’s just a far-out thing when it happens. Well, last year, we had The Magic going with the whole gym here, but we also had another circuit of The Magic running with just you guys. Most of the time, we were bouncing off you, from “Dark Star” on to the end. So we’re all really glad you’re still together, and we’re gonna dedicate tonight’s show to you. Let’s see, Ian Waters and Dyanne McDonald, right?”

“Not quite,” said Ian. “Ian McDonald and Dyanne the Beautiful.”

“Jerry thinks one of you is a spare part,” Bob Ward, a guitarist, interrupted.

“No, I don’t,” said Jerry. “Dyanne Waters—” he pointed at Ian, “and Ian McDonald.” He laughed and pointed to Dyanne. “Anyhow, I got an offer for you. My crystal ball tells me that before a year passes, you’re getting hitched. We talked about this in a band meeting this morning. We wanna play at your wedding.”

Ian was stunned. Premature planning or not, this was as good as it got. “You know, I don’t think you’re kidding,” he said. “Sounds great to me.”

“If we get married, you have a gig,” said Dyanne.

“Shake, man,” said Jerry, offering his hand to Ian, who pumped it.

“Sealed with a kiss,” said Dyanne, hugging Jerry and kissing him on the cheek.



They walked on air all evening. True to promise, Jerry announced the concert's dedication after the first two songs, requesting everyone to clear the floor so Dyanne could dance alone with Ian. The song was "Attics of My Life." It was slow, romantic, and featured a spotlight right on them as they danced the foxtrot—with Dyanne leading, of course. After the first two verses, the spot went off and Jerry invited everyone else to join the couple on the floor.

After that one, Ian noticed an overstuffed armchair that someone had put right where their chair had been the year before, with a sign saying, "Reserved for Dyanne and Ian." They sank into it, with Dyanne in Ian's lap. As he held her, he noticed tears streaming down her cheeks.

"What's wrong, dear?" he asked.

"Nothing's wrong," she said, sniffing. "I'm just—so—happy tonight. I don't want it to ever end. These fellows have been so nice to us, and I don't know why."

"I don't know, either." All this talk today of marriage, of weddings, was getting to him. Now wasn't the time to propose. He had no ring, and he had never felt so unprepared in his life. And they sat in front of God and everybody. Gentlemen proposed to ladies in private.

"Stay by me, Ian! Stay by me!" Dyanne pleaded. "Don't ever leave me!"

"I won't," he said, squeezing her. "Dyanne, I love you." Hearing that, she quit bawling, wiped her tears, and kissed him.

At some point, Ian noticed Tori operating the field gear, with Hulda helping him. He suddenly remembered he was supposed to be doing that, but Tori didn't seem to mind.

Hours of music rolled by. When the Warlocks played a slow number, he and Dyanne got up and danced. When it was fast, they sat it out. "In the Midnight Hour" came around eleven—this time, their tango was a lot less impromptu than last year, due to much practice. Sometime around midnight, Jerry startled them with an announcement. "Thursday night, Ian taught me two new songs I'd never heard before," he said. "We've been fooling around with them since then, and we're now up to playing 'em in front of people, man. Dyanne, Ian, hop up on the stage. I know you guys can sing. I want you to sing these two with us."

This was a bolt from nowhere. The lovers rose and climbed up to where Jerry was. Ian saw two extra mikes; Jerry only seemed impromptu.

"The songs are about something that happened not so long ago, on a world far, far away from us," Jerry continued. "Ian told me it was the greatest thing humanity's ever done, and I agree. The first is called 'Toast for Unsung Heroes,' and the second is 'Hope Eyrie.'"

He then whispered to both of them. "I know this is a surprise. You sang these to me before. Up to it now?" Ian nodded as he moved to his mike. It was at just the right height for him, as Dyanne's was for her. Impromptu, my maiden auntie! He'd show them he could sing. He'd sung second tenor in his church's choir for two years, sometimes filling in for the lead, and he knew Dyanne sang a mean soprano.

After a lengthy guitar intro, similar to what was on Ian's tape from last summer's convention, they all began singing. The tune was the old whaling song, "Bonny Ship the *Diamond*."

*A man is walking on the Moon, with his eyes turned up toward space  
And the bright, blue world that watches him reflected on his face.  
The whole world sees the hero there, and the module crew also,  
But few can see the guiding team that guards him from below.*

Then came the chorus, an old union organizing song pulled whole from the *IWW Songbook*:

*Step by step, the longest march can be won, can be won.  
Many stones can form an arch. Singly, none. Singly, none.  
And together what we will can be accomplished still.  
Many drops can turn a mill. Singly, none. Singly, none.*

They were actually doing it! Neither of them missed a beat or a word. During an instrumental bridge, Ian thought it incongruous that a church-choir tenor and a near-operatic soprano were singing with a rock-and-roll group, but the various members of the Warlocks looked happy with their singing. He also noticed Jerry was mumbling his lines, so it was a good thing they were there. Mumbled lyrics were a chronic problem with the Warlocks.

After the second verse, the crowd was joining in on the choruses, which was a good sign. And after the last couplet, “For all who blaze the sky trail, sing out to every shore/What makes one step a giant leap is all the steps before!” the audience practically roared as they sang.

*Worlds grow old, and suns grow cold, and Death we never can doubt.  
Time's cold wind, wailing down the past, reminds us that all flesh is grass  
And History's lamps blow out.  
But the Eagle has landed. Tell your children when.  
Time won't drive us down to dust again.*

Ian sang “Hope Eyrie” as if it were one of those solemn, yet joyous hymns the Episcopal Church was famous for. Dyanne went at it like Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus.” Together, they left Phil, Bob, and Jerry behind. If only the guys wouldn’t mumble so! But their instrumental work was superb.

As the final chords died out, Ian realized he was sweating a lot. But they must have done okay; Tori looked up at him and pointed both his thumbs up.

Jerry invited them backstage afterwards, where they were offered tokens of grass by Jerry and snorts from a bottle of Southern Comfort by Pig Pen. They politely declined the pot, but thankfully sipped the booze—they both needed something after that surprise party. Jerry reiterated his wedding-gig offer, and exchanged addresses with Ian.

On the off-chance Jerry might like it, Ian sang for him the song about “little, teeny eyes” that he’d heard earlier, and which had inspired some clown calling himself “Hermes” to insert into Sanford’s new computer’s foundational programming. The guitarist ended up plunking around with that tune as they left.

As they wafted their way back to Balmer Hall, holding one another close, Dyanne asked, "Ian, was that all real? I dreamed we sang with the Warlocks."

"No dream. A good thing, too. Jerry swallows his words."

"I didn't really notice. I was mostly hearing us. You know, maybe those songs will get onto one of their records, and then the whole world will hear them."

"That'll be cool," said Ian. "Trouble with NASA is, they've got the respectables. They need support from people like the Warlocks. Not just from Cronkite."

As they sat down on his bed, lights low and incense burning, Ian decided not to try any telepathy. His emotions were running his mind just then, and he figured he'd muddle things up. So he cuddled Dyanne and listened to Crazy Susan's "Million-Year Picnic" show—Inanna could wait.

Someone had other ideas. "*Ian McDonald, are you there? I must speak with you.*" It was a woman's voice, but not Dyanne's. Why did he have to get mental phone calls in the middle of the goddamned night? The voice was a soft, but firm, alto. Could this be—

"*Inanna?*" he asked.

"*I am Inanna,*" she said. "*It is high time we spoke together, although I will do most of the talking. Ian, you must marry Dyanne, and soon.*"

"*I'm planning on it,*" said Ian. "*What's it to you?*" Oh, hell. This Inanna was acting like a meddling matchmaker.

"*It is most important that you and Dyanne marry. She needs you.*"

"*I know she needs me. But I'm not yet ready to marry. I'm only nineteen!*" Unspoken, far from his mental mike, was his mother's admonition: "Marry in haste, repent at leisure."

"*She needs emotional distance from her mother. Only you can provide that.*"

"*I'm too young. I don't have a real job yet,*" said Ian. Left unsaid were his fears that, were they to marry now, he could not provide for her in the style to which she was accustomed. Her mother was rich and employed servants. All her clothes came from a dressmaker. She went through as much paint and powder as a battleship.

"*Do not worry about Dyanne's material needs,*" said Inanna. "*Her mother will never let her want. What matters are her emotional needs. She has had friends and casual acquaintances, but you are the first person outside her household she has ever loved. Until you, the only such people were her mother and her nanny.*"

"*I had no idea.*" He didn't. That sounded like an awfully restricted life she had led. In his own life, there had been Mom, Dad, Eloise, Susan, and two girls he thought he'd been in love with during high school. Then he realized he hadn't had many deep attachments, either. Growing up, everyone in his neighborhood was either Navy or civil service, and they were always coming and going. The pals of his boyhood and buddies of his youth were all gone. Here at college, he had friends, mostly at KSCW, but how close was he to them, really? Of course, between his studies and the station and Dyanne, he hadn't had much time or energy for anyone else. And Dyanne was the issue.

"*Think about it. I know the ways of love far better than either of you. The right time for you is likely to be next summer. You cannot see it now, but at that time you will be ready. Think of Jerry Garza as a prophet. Today, he foretold your wedding.*"

"Hey, how did you know about that?"

"We were there this afternoon. You just did not see us."

"But how?" Ian was puzzled, and a bit annoyed. Inanna was starting to sound like New Age.

"We have ways to see and hear what we wish to. Two of them are clairvoyance and clairaudience. Do not doubt those; you do not doubt telepathy, and the talents are related. Other ways involve technology far beyond what you know. Consider a surveillance device the size of a dust mite."

"That's impossible!" Ian protested. "I do know something about electronics."

"A bare century ago, your radio station was not even a dream. You are tiring fast, so I must remind you: Propose to Dyanne, and soon. It is the end of October now. Three months hence will be too late, as it will take her mother several months to prepare the wedding."

"I can do that."

"Good," said Inanna. "You and Dyanne are very dear to us, and we do not wish to see either of you unhappy. Get in touch with Enki from time to time; you have much to learn from him. I will be seeing you again."

With that, Inanna was gone from Ian's mind.

"You were with Inanna," said Dyanne.

"How did you know?" Ian asked.

"She told me, and said I needed to stay out of the loop and anchor you."

"Thanks. Let's get you home. I'm worn out. I have to be up at ten to help Tori again."



This being the third run-through setting up the broadcast connection, Ian and Tori had little trouble with it. The station's news staff had a license for a low-power FM connection with the base studio, eliminating the need for stringing long cables all over kingdom come.

The band set up right in front of Balmer Hall, at the upslope end of Ankeny Quad. The air was a mite nippy, but the sun shone in a clear sky. By one o'clock, the Quad was filled with hundreds of people, all seated on the ground.

Ian and Dyanne sat next to Tori, as Ian was helping him run things this time. The whole scene reminded Ian of the Jefferson Airplane's "Saturday Afternoon." *Acid, incense, and balloons.* He guessed there were a few in the audience who had taken LSD, and there was certainly an aroma of incense in the autumn air, as well as many balloons in evidence. There was also pot smoke; the incense didn't entirely mask it.

The concert was pleasant and laid-back, not like the intense show the previous night. Dyanne kept her hands to herself, off the equipment and mostly off him; she learned something from the burglar alarm incident. Just prior to the first number, Jerry did warn them he was going to have them sing again, this time early in the first set.

*I'm gonna sing again with the Warlocks. Don't that beat all?* He remembered how he'd been called "sissy" and "mama's boy" by the grade-school bullies because he always did what Mom told him to, liked his piano lessons, and had much more interest in the insides of radios than the inside of a gym. He didn't mind

“mama’s boy” too much; how could he be anything else, with Dad at sea, at Cape Canaveral, or gone to Washington all the time? And Mom, even now, often talked about what a sweet child he’d been when he was small.

But as soon as he learned how to make simple circuits work, he played a few electrical pranks on his tormentors, which got them to leave him and his few friends alone. *If only those bullies could see me now, singing with the best band around.*

So, after Jerry sang “Little Teeny Eyes” to a round of laughing applause, Ian and Dyanne got up and sang “Toast for Unsung Heroes” and “Hope Eyrie,” and this time, the band sounded better. Obviously, the Warlocks had done a bit more rehearsal that morning. Jerry didn’t even mumble much.



The next month ad more went by quickly. Ian and Dyanne studied, courted, did radio shows, and practiced telepathy. After a few more weekly sessions with Enki and Inanna, their mental communications improved tremendously. They could now hail the two “gods” at the same time, without needing one person to anchor the other. During Thanksgiving weekend, Ian drove to a town forty miles away and called Dyanne telepathically. She came in loud and clear.

In early December, they tried a joint session with Enki and Inanna, something they’d never done before. It was also the first time Ian spoke with Inanna since Homecoming weekend. The prospect gave him butterflies; she was so formidable and no-nonsense.

The session included visuals and took place in Inanna’s sitting room, which reminded Ian a great deal of Versailles—he’d seen that palace a couple of years before, during a family trip to Europe. Enki was a Sumerian king, as always, while Inanna looked more in character with her mental surroundings. He guessed her style came from Madame Pompadour or Marie Antoinette.

He and Dyanne could see themselves and each other in this situation. In two previous talks with Enki, Ian saw himself, so it was no surprise that he looked like he usually did when doing technical work in the station, complete with shop apron (he hated getting solder on his clothes). Dyanne was her usual lovely self.

They talked for quite a while, but it was mostly chatter between Dyanne and Inanna, with Enki and Ian occasionally getting a word in edgewise. Near the end, in reply to a question from Dyanne, Inanna said, *“We live now on your planet, and have for a long time, but we come from elsewhere in space. Our vessels, when seen, are counted among the many UFOs.”*

UFOs? That was a new turn of events. Ian wanted to pump Inanna for more info on that, but it was suddenly time to go. Enki and Inanna bade them farewell, saying the lovers needed all their strength and attention for final exams. They would meet again in January.



Finals were no sweat. Professor Isherwood issued an open-book take-home exam in Vector Calculus, which Ian found challenging, but not too tough.

Professor Gernsback, in Quantum Mechanics, did the same. Two of his hardest problems were simple, for those who knew radio. The man was faculty advisor for KSCW, and liked science fiction. Ian recalled on the first day of class that Dr. Gernsback wrote on the board, “No relation to Hugo!” Apparently, a lot of his students also read SF.

Dr. Thompson didn’t issue a final to his advanced students. Instead, he wanted them to summarize everything they knew about the PDP-11 and about Unix, which he announced after Thanksgiving—he wanted to compile his own system documentation with student help. Ian gave him a hefty bundle; he knew as much about the PDP as his professor did, and more about Unix. Not that his knowledge was anything like complete; everything pertaining to the PDP was a work in progress.

Intermediate Piano didn’t have a written final. He got to play a tough piece in front of Dr. Romulo, who graded his skill. Lastly, there was the France in the Enlightenment history course, which he’d signed up for because he’d genuinely enjoyed visiting Versailles and the Louvre, and Dyanne was also in the class. The exam was duck soup—much of his energy went into imagining a possible wedding scene. He’d dress like the Marquis de Lafayette, while his bride would be done up like one of Marie Antoinette’s ladies—all wrapped up in ruffles and tied in bows like a Christmas present, just for him. Wouldn’t happen, of course, but it was fun to dream.

He expected to pull four As and a B, the lower grade in piano, which was what he got. Piano was his hardest subject, despite overtime practicing. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn’t get the simplest Mozart pieces to sound like anything other than a tyro hitting all the right notes but missing the song. Beethoven? His rendition of the “Moonlight Sonata” sounded like he’d been hitting the moonshine jug. And as for Chopin, forget it. He’d give anything, short of life and liberty, for the pursuit of happiness as a virtuoso pianist. If only he could play music the way he made solder joints!

They left for Christmas break in separate cars, as was their habit, convoying back to the Sea/Tac area. Telepathy made this a snap, as long as they kept their contacts brief. It was like having a two-way radio in their cars, but on a channel nobody else could use. This came in handy when climbing Snoqualmie Pass. Ian could tell Dyanne to get Ellie to slow down so his VW could keep up. Mountain climbing was not its strong suit.



FIELD to HQ: Away from college, Ian doesn’t use telepathy, except to arrange trysts. Dyanne has contacted aliens, possibly Grays.

HQ to FIELD: Trysts trivial, alien contact not. If Grays, they stir pot randomly. May hinder Contact. Enemy (my enemy) = friend. Sit tight and observe.

Am issuing you hardened communicator, proof against Gray tricks. Enki, Inanna can’t snoop it. Expect teleport delivery tonight.



Electra had held something back from HQ—lack of a hardened communicator had kept her silent. Prior to Dyanne’s contact with the Grays, she’d gotten in touch with them herself. She then guided her charge to the Grays without any random casting about. One entity she did *not* want Dyanne to talk to was Ashtar of the hilariously-overblown “Galactic Command”—his Sunday-school “ethics” would be a setback to Electra’s efforts.

Something was about to *happen*. The Grays could and would solve the problem she’d battled for years—Dyanne’s chronic suicidal tendencies. No one wanted Dyanne to do herself in, not even Electra’s father, who opposed Enki and Inanna squarely in the matter of Contact. That particular failure mode would not suit his purposes.

## 5: Steal Your Face

3 January 1971

Dyanne and Ian returned to Sanford at the earliest possible date, when the dorms reopened for the upcoming Interim “free university” program. The dorms opened Saturday night, so they convoyed back that day.

Sunday found Ian and Tori rousing KSCW from dormancy, assisted by several of the DJs who showed up early. For the evening, Dyanne announced a date was in order, an informal dinner followed by a movie. *2001: A Space Odyssey* was in syndication again, and they both loved that picture. Ian once dropped a girlfriend during high school because she slept through that film.

Dyanne was getting better about his Volkswagen; she asked him to drive it, rather than using her Mercedes. The movie was its grand old self, with the murderously mis-programmed computer, the desperate astronaut, and the utterly incomprehensible slabs. The show reminded him of KSCW’s recently-arrived Cheech & Chong album—he thought the final line in the HAL-and-Dave conversation outside the ship should’ve ended with HAL saying, “Dave’s not here, man.”

It being January in eastern Washington, they were bundled up, Ian in the new down-fill parka given him by his mother, and Dyanne in her full-length, light-beige mink coat. She wanted a midnight ride in the country, as the sky was black and full of bright stars. Ian took them out on a backroad he knew well. It hadn’t been plowed, but he had studded snow tires and knew how to keep from getting stuck. The front seat was cozy, especially with Dyanne’s fur coat. Occasionally they’d stop and look out the windows at Orion, Canis Major, Taurus, and all the other winter stars, and then Dyanne would snuggle even closer to him than she already was. He loved the plush feel of her coat.

After three or four of these halts, he decided to turn around. The VW being what it was, this was no problem, even on a snow-packed road. But on reversing course, he saw something in the sky that did not belong there.

It was like nothing he'd ever seen. It appeared double-convex, with red and white lights shining around its rim. There was a lighted dome on top, and he thought he saw one or two figures inside. If they were human, the thing must be around thirty to forty feet in diameter. It was perhaps a hundred feet up in the air.

"What's that?" Dyanne asked. Ian could sense the fear in her voice, even though he had never heard her afraid before.

"Don't know. Hang on!" He would run under it—even on snow-packed pavement, he could push the Vee-Wee to forty without ending up in the ditch. He shifted gears, gave the Bug the gas, heard it roar, and—it stalled.

The engine quit, the lights went out, and the dashboard went dark. Ian tried the ignition key several times. No dice. Nothing—not even a solenoid click. The Volkswagen was dead.

"Rats," he said. "Car's had it. I'm going for help."

"Don't open your door! It's closer!"

Ian looked up and to the left. The thing was indeed closer, and there were now four legs underneath it—landing gear? He felt stripped, inadequate, frustrated. This thing was overhead, his car wasn't a car anymore, and his girl needed his protection. For once in his life, he wished he carried a weapon, plus the knowledge of how to use it—something lethal to hand. Dad actively discouraged him from learning about knives and guns when he was younger. He grasped at a straw. "Do you think that might be Enki and Inanna?"

"Can't be. Whatever this is doesn't feel at all like them."

"It's a UFO."

*"Ian, link to me now! They're gonna grab us!"* she called to his mind.

Wordlessly, he gripped her mind, held it close to his. He could see her next to him in the front seat as they held one another in a savage embrace.

Then he saw himself, from Dyanne's side of the car, and glanced down—he was in fur coat and gloves. Was he *Dyanne*?

He now heard words: *"Ian—Dyanne—Ian—Dyanne—love you—love you—darling—sweetheart—"* He couldn't tell who was saying what; it sounded like he was speaking in Dyanne's rich soprano, and she was using his tenor.

He felt an insistent push, and he settled down firmly in Dyanne's fur coat and evening gown in the Volkswagen. He looked intently upon himself in his parka. He tried to think himself back into his correct body, to no avail. It made no sense; he was Dyanne.

The thing above them loomed closer; the landing legs surrounded the car. Ian tried once more to move but couldn't. His limbs were paralyzed, and so was his mind. He was Dyanne.

*"I can't move,"* he said—but his mental voice was Dyanne's.

Dyanne's voice came through to him, only as his own calm tenor. *"My girl, my girl, my sweet girl."* The thing now came to rest right over the car. Luckily, there was sufficient clearance. *"Whatever happens to us, Dyanne the Beautiful, I love you."*

Then all went dark.



Ian came to in the Volkswagen, wearing Dyanne's coat and dress, and saw himself in the driver's seat. The car was running down the deserted county road, heading back to town. This wouldn't work. If he was in Dyanne's body, Dyanne was trying to drive, and she didn't know how to drive a stick—or in winter. They were only doing fifteen, thank God.

"You don't know how to drive this," he said—in Dyanne's voice. "Let up on the gas and coast to a stop." The guy(?) in the left seat did so, and, once stopped, they got out and traded seats.

The driver's seat was all out of adjustment, of course. Then there were Dyanne's awful heels, which he'd wobbled on during the seat-swap. Rather than make a complete muddle of his driving, and perhaps dive for the ditch, he shifted into first gear (whoever had placed them back in the car put the thing in high), which was OK for the conditions and lack of traffic. That way, he wouldn't need to use his clutch foot at all. As it was, he wanted to use the brake as little as possible; the roads were definitely worse than they'd been earlier. He would worry about this weird situation later, after parking it at Dyanne's house.

He looked at—his watch? Her watch? 2:30. He'd turned around to go home just before midnight. The stars were all wrong for that time but correct for the indicated time.

He was Dyanne, and he had no connection now to the male body sitting next to him. What was worse, the body he was in had only sketchy muscle-memory of driving. Of course, Dyanne seldom drove—Ellie took her everywhere. He had to make every move consciously—conscious that one misstep could lead to disaster. He remembered a silly joke of Crazy Susan's about consciousness: "To do something consciously, go step-by-step through a series of 'Now' statements—you can walk the dog consciously, go to class consciously, even raid the refrigerator consciously. Now I am walking to the fridge. Now I am opening the door. Now I am reaching for something-or-other. Now I am opening it. Now I am biting it. Now I am chewing it. Now I am savoring it. Now I am swallowing it. Now I am throwing up."

With a giggle, he began muttering, in Dyanne's rich, sweet voice, "Now I am signaling. Now I am slowing. Now I am turning right. Now I am speeding up to ten. Now there is a snowplow in front of me. Thank goodness. Now I am following it." He loved hearing her enchanting voice, even if she was silent and he was the one speaking.

Half an hour's white-knuckle crawling got them the five miles back to Dyanne's, where he parked on the street so as not to block the driveway. Tomorrow, he wanted to check the VW over. That total stall-out was as far outside his experience as this business of suddenly turning into a woman.

"What next?" he asked.

"I'm not sure," said the other fellow—Ian had trouble thinking of him as "Dyanne." Funny, Dyanne always knew what she wanted to do.

"A guess, then. I, well, can go to bed in my, er, room, and you go to one of the guestrooms."

"Probably a good notion. I don't want to walk to the dorm at this hour, in this weather."

"First thing in the morning, I'll call Crazy Susan and get her to bring over my shaving kit and a change of clothes," said Ian. "If this wears off in our sleep,

I'll want them. If it doesn't, you'll want them, and want instruction, too. Thank heaven I shave electric. Uh, I'll need instruction, too, dammit."

"No, you won't. Ellie's done everything for me, all my life. Just let her dress and undress you."



Electra sensed the kids' coming for some time before they arrived. Yes, what she hoped might occur, had done so. There was a new Ian and a new Dyanne, meaning a lot of shock and confusion. She had more than enough strength and skill to keep that from getting out of hand.

She held off until Dyanne—the new one—parked the car; she kept herself too busy with driving safely to notice anything else. As for the new Ian, he'd been enjoying the ride with very little shock, amazement, or disorientation. Not too surprising, given that the mind-exchange had been partly his idea.

She roused Iphigenia—Effie, to Dyanne—to care for the unexpected guest, and made ready to help Dyanne into bed. A probe into Ian showed that, although he approved of the new state of affairs, he didn't remember how it came about, any more than Dyanne did.

She did *not* approve. "*How the hell did I get turned into a girl?*" was at the top of her mind, followed by, "*How the hell am I gonna walk in these goddamn heels?*" Electra reached into Dyanne to assist her, to keep her from stumbling and falling as she made her way into the house. It was fortunate that her bedroom was on the first floor.

Had Electra been the quarter-blood nymph Inanna thought she was, she wouldn't have had the ability to hold Dyanne numb while assisting Ian and managing several other mental tasks (mostly involving Dyanne) at once. Despite the testimony of Homer (who got her name wrong) and every Greek tragedian worth his salt, Electra's father was not Agamemnon, but a full-blooded someone else who preferred her ancestry to be hidden from all.

She needed everything she had for Dyanne, at least to do what she must without tipping her hand. Given the situation, Inanna would expect her to keep the kids from going crazy from the abrupt trading of minds. Trouble was, Dyanne was a lot more complex than Ian, and it didn't help that the exchange was probably permanent. Perhaps Hades or Hermes might know otherwise, but Electra was no psychopomp.

That is, it didn't help Dyanne. Were the new Ian told the change was for good, he'd rejoice. Electra foresaw that her biggest problem with Ian would be curbing the immature impulses of an inexperienced young man.

And she knew what young men in trousers could do. Grimy barbarians in pants, just a few leagues away from Mycenae. Only barbarians wore them—and so this whole society was barbaric. That rape was common went with the clothing. Disgusting!

And women were taking them up.

In Olympus, no one wore them, except for field work.

And now, she had to deal with a woman, now become a man, who *liked* the style!

She'd bear with it, somehow.

If only she were *in charge* . . .

Dyanne promised to be a legion of problems, starting with her being a masculine personality stuffed into a feminine corpus. Electra hoped she wouldn't have to be as vigilant for suicide attempts as she'd had to be with the old Dyanne, all the while having to somehow mold the girl into the lady her mother insisted upon—a high-maintenance lady, at that.

The girl had to be totally unfamiliar with the stays she was wearing, too—the mental impression she got was that the new Dyanne was aware of “some kind of funny girdle.” Everyone in the Waters household wore them; that was one of the plusses of this field assignment. Her putative employer was convinced that Women Wore Corsets—it was a law of Nature. Even that awful Susan and her peculiar mother always wore them. Electra had worn them since she was a princess in the palace of Agamemnon.

Tonight, she'd keep matters simple, getting Dyanne out of her evening clothes and into a nightgown, wrapping the girl's hairdo up in tissue paper so she could easily repair it in the morning.



“Susie, this is Dyanne.” It was confusing to say that on the telephone, but saying he—she? was Ian was worse. “Ian had to stay the night at my place.”

“Hope you had fun.”

“Weird stuff happened during our date last night, and the weather didn't help. It would be great if you could bring over his shaving kit and a change of clothes. Oh, and can you haul his automotive toolbox over, too? The VW stalled, and we almost didn't make it back.”

“Anything for a friend. I was coming over anyway in a few minutes for Effie to fix my hair.”

“He isn't awake yet. The front door's unlocked, just come in and put everything into the usual guestroom. I just woke up, but I'm going to doze a bit longer until Ellie has to get busy with me.”

One thing was clear as Dyanne hung up the phone. A good night's sleep hadn't rectified the problem, so it might be better to think of *herself* as “Dyanne.” *She* felt less confused when doing this, although she couldn't put her finger on why.

An hour later, Ian surprised her by knowing how to get dressed; five minutes after Susan left he stepped out freshly clothed with no mistakes evident. The only thing he needed help with was how to use an electric shaver. She wondered about this, until recalling the old Dyanne had once mentioned always playing the lead trouser roles in her girls' school's drama troupe.

Effie, the cook/housekeeper (and apparently a part-time lady's maid for Susan), fixed them a late breakfast while Dyanne was still in robe and slippers, but now it was time for what she'd been dreading: Getting Dressed. The only thing she could see was to go along with whatever Ellie did, without comment—her girlfriend had done this every day, and she didn't want her maid to think she was nuts.

As she sat down to pee (which took active thought), she struggled to remember how women got dressed. She'd never watched Susan do that, of course, as that girl ran to odd habits—she always went to Dyanne's after supper to return in a robe with her hair rolled up for the night and went back there after a hasty dorm breakfast. Whenever there was much snow, she usually slept there, too. Susie had never asked, "Ian, can you zip me up, please?" the way Mom and Eloise sometimes did when Phoebe, their maid, wasn't handy.

Dyanne recalled bits and pieces of what Mom had told her about what women wore, and what Mom and Eloise usually did about getting up and dressed. Apart from making a Broadway production of it (along with the grand opera they often made of going to bed), she couldn't dredge up much in the way of details. One thing she could never forget, because it was so amusing, was how Eloise often combed her hair backwards into snarls until all her hair stood out from her head. Never mind sticking her finger into an outlet, Eloise looked like she'd held onto a Van de Graaf generator running full-tilt boogie. Getting assistance from Phoebe didn't help—that was like adding in all the equipment at Lawrence Livermore Labs.

It turned out that Ellie did no such thing to her hair; instead, she made a few adjustments to the umpteen jillion pins that held it together. Dressing wasn't too time-consuming, just confusing. She *had* forgotten most of Mom's information as to what went underneath dresses. The one real annoyance was her shoes: tall, spike heels, in which she wobbled when she walked. Girls did the darnedest things!

She simply didn't recall what either mother or sister (or roomie, for that matter) did about their faces, just that they did a lot—and so did Ellie. It seemed as if her maid had learned her trade from the International Brotherhood of Bricklayers (AFL-CIO), the way she troweled the stuff on. After nearly half an hour of fiddling, her face looked familiar again—the face she loved to kiss, only it was *her* face now.

All this stuff showed her that women were indeed more fragile than men, and everything pertaining to them was delicate, to be treated like a piece of precision electronic gear. Handle with care, follow the instruction manual, don't overload the manufacturer's specs, and above all, Do Not Drop. Mom had taught her something about this, but that had been all theory and no practice.

From out of nowhere came a warm glow, which heated up to near-boiling—it felt sexual, directed toward the lady in the mirror—nothing like what she'd always felt about Dyanne up to now, which was warm and fuzzy—not this!

She'd hardly spoken to her maid the whole time, but she found her voice now. "You've made me beautiful." Not what she'd intended to say.

"That's always been the idea. If only you could *be* a beautiful lady, instead of just acting the part, like you've always done, you'd be perfect."

She wasn't sure what to say next—it would've been a stinging rebuke, had she been the real Dyanne. That the ever-pushy Dyanne took this kind of guff off her maid told her Ellie was her instructor, as well as her dresser and chauffeur. Perhaps Doris Waters had relied on nannies and maids to raise her child, rather than doing it herself, the way Mom did.

Mom had taught her kids etiquette from both sides of the fence, as she had with ballroom dancing, to the point where being a gentleman was second nature

to Ian. That he automatically knew what a lady would expect of him, plus his natural desire to be nice to people, should've kept him from having any trouble with girls.

Dyanne remembered several broken relationships, despite being consistently kind and considerate. One thing she still had was the urge to be nice, so she said, after a moment, "Thank you, Ellie. I promise to do my best."

"Now, my beauteous maiden," said Ellie, "go to the mirror, girl." She walked to the nearest full-length one. "Tell me truly: Are you, or are you not, the prettiest young lady who ever walked the Earth?"

Dyanne surprised herself with, "Of course, I'm the prettiest!"

"Good girl. You must always think of yourself as that—your looks are, by far, your most important and useful asset. Keep that always in mind, and be a lady, especially when you're with your gentleman. A lady always strives to please her man."

That last bit of advice jarred with what she'd heard from Mom. This was probably temporary, though, and her promise ought to cover the situation. She wasn't sure how much longer she'd need to "do her best," but it never hurt to say that, since it was the way she operated, anyway. "If it's worth doing at all, it's worth doing well," was a foundation principle of the McDonald family.

Most likely, she'd not have to put up with being female much longer; she and Ian had agreed to attempt contact with Enki and Inanna after lunch. Surely, they could bail them out of the pickle they were in.



The Observer looked at the upside-out, inside-down situation. He'd watched Dyanne set herself up (unaware of Electra's help), monitored the close encounter, and now took in the aftermath. Inanna would have her hands full with this, even if she sprouted a couple of extra arms.

He almost never meddled; it would foul up an already-delicate balance. His usually-burdensome prophetic sense could actually be helpful in guiding the maintenance of that balance. He'd done so twice now; his initial meddling, back in 1890, had nudged this world onto a different track. His second adjustment, in 1910, had ensured a key player would be born. The hilarious thing was that, without that second bit of interference, Inanna would have no Contact project. Never mind that, absent his first deliberate change, this world would be in a sorry mess.

It had almost slid down into being an even sorrier mess during a ten-year period surrounding World War II, due to the nefarious actions of Something Else—the Shadow. It hadn't been those gray nuisances, the Zeta Reticulans (who had pulled the mind-swap on those kids), nor was it any of the other neighbor races those Pentagon UFO buffs knew about. The Shadow was local and powerful, but all save a tiny few of his fellow Olympians knew nothing about it. Oh, he'd informed Zeus once, but the Thunderer blew him off as being hopelessly paranoid.

The worldwide catastrophe had been deflected by a potent neighbor—the only colleague of his who was aware of that helpful entity was old Cronus, who

probably knew a great deal about it. The Observer, on the other hand, knew only that the Shadow had a non-Olympian opponent who recently did battle with it. The visible scar of the battle was a brand-new active volcano in the English Midlands.

The world, of course, knew nothing of the epic struggle in the Midlands and elsewhere. All they were aware of was a cluster of three less significant conflicts: the two World Wars and the ongoing Cold War. They would most likely remain blissfully ignorant of the doom now hanging over them.

He, however, was anxiously aware of that doom, which was certain to fall. A “doom,” he knew, could be positive as well as negative, as the word traditionally meant “judgment.” Judges always pronounced a doom at the conclusion of a trial. It could be “innocent” as well as “guilty,” and in Scottish courts it could also be “not proven.” If guilty, a “sentence” was part of the doom.

Until the doom was pronounced, no one knew what it was, and all involved in the case feared it (even the prosecutor did, as “innocent” or “not proven” meant he lost the case). The Observer knew, from his supremely-troubling sense of future events, that this new doom centered on Dyanne.

Oddly, this impending doom was not to be found in the “sorry mess” he had so adroitly fended off—that world was sore beset by troubles, but they did not include the nasty events which ended with that volcano. Perhaps he should not have meddled. However, his foresight then had shown no hint of the new doom.

Inanna’s Contact project was necessary to this doom, but not sufficient. It would fall via Dyanne as its instrument, but it would be pronounced by another, a woman very close to her.

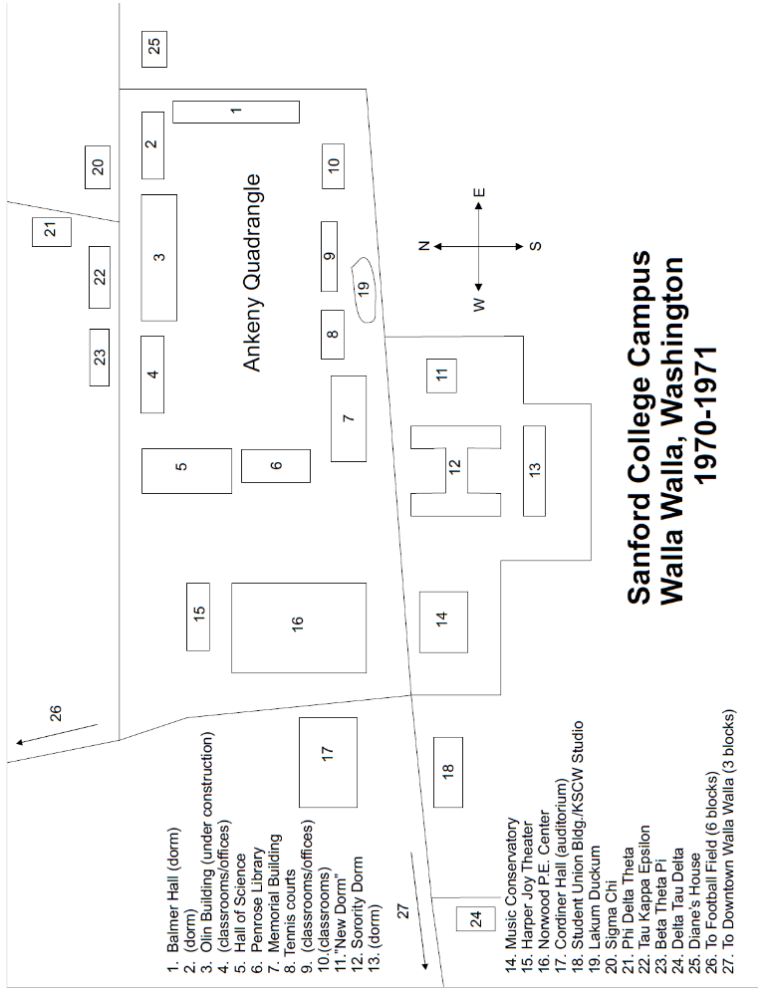
Were Dyanne to perish prior to all this, or even fail in her role as mediator, the doom would be taken up by another jurisdiction, as it were—the same Shadow whose recent machinations had come to grief in the erupting throat of that English volcano.

The Observer did not want to be anywhere near this planet if that happened!

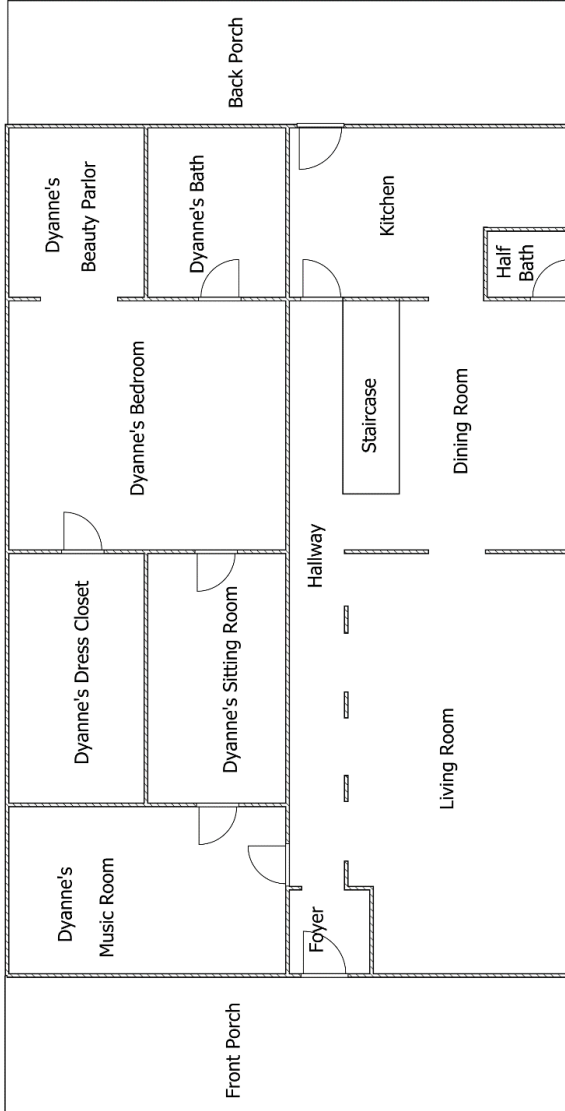
*[Chapters 6-45 omitted]*

# Maps and Diagrams

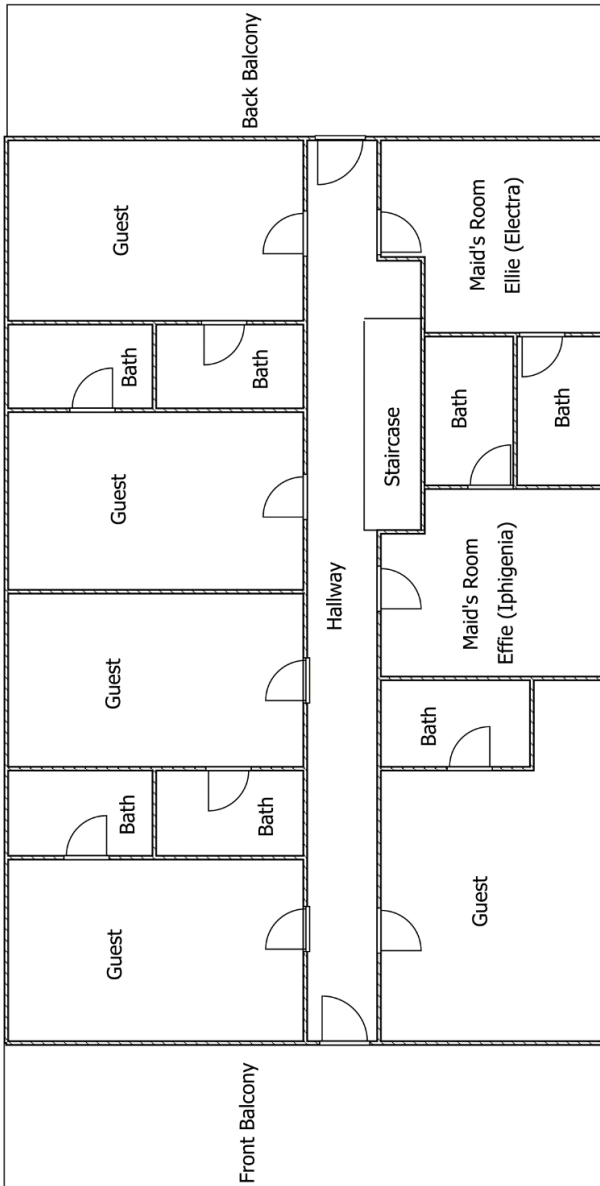
## 1. Sanford College Campus



## 2. Dyanne's House, First Floor



### 3. Dyanne's House, Second Floor



## 4. KSCW Studio Floorplan



## About the Author

Sourdough Jackson, a transwoman, began reading SF with a Jules Verne novel at the age of six, and has been reading it avidly ever since. After graduating from Whitman College in 1973, she became active in science fiction fandom. She met Denver fan and artist Gail Barton at a convention, and they married in 1978. Sadly, this ended in 2018 when Gail died after a long illness.

Sourdough has for many years written a monthly column on classic science fiction, "Writers of the Purple Page," which is published in a local fanzine. She is also a lifelong student of naval history, mythology, and space exploration.