NEGAVIT

George Abbe

S.U.N.Y., Plattsburgh

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At the village's Cultural Center, in the middle of the broad lawns surrounded by the public buildings, stood a huge Art Display Board on which were hung the most provocative and moving of the new paintings by our villagers. Frequently, an artist would interpret in an oil or watercolor the impact on him or her of some person on another planet recently contacted through extra-sensory powers--somebody not yet seen physically but sensed with extraordinary spiritual acuteness; and the effects in color and line were mystical, startling, thrilling.

Here I was standing the next morning, looking over some of these supra-rational, intuitive creations and congratulating myself on the educational effect our trip to Roonif's had had on Grayson and the hermit's revelations regarding Agra and myself (Grayson had been sober today, and if he finally decided to abandon his illegal researches, he would not be brought to trial at all)--I was absorbed in these matters when I heard a soft voice behind me and swung about.

"Why isn't something of yours on exhibit, Doan?"

It was Cheryl Jalnair, the small-boned, delicate faced, dark skinned woman who was Co-Director of the Clairvoyance Institute for the Young. Cheryl was the one woman in Unaria who had tempted me to break my powerful attachment to Agra, my complete moral integrity and control. She had stirred and excited me at one time when I had been doing work at her Institute, and one evening when we had been alone in her office, I had been overcome by physical desire and kissed her fiercely.

Jim Harter, *Animals*: 1419
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New York: Dover, 1979

She had gone soft and submissive in my arms, murmuring: "It is a criminal thing, a terrible fault, but I love you, Doan."

I had kissed her again, lust flaming through my blood. Our caresses had been brief and intense. Then, shame sheered up in me, clashing with this mad infatuation, and at last I had pulled away, cursing us both.

Afterward, of course, I had reviled myself mercilessly.

"My God! Loving Agra as I do, what Black Ray struck me; what Black Demonic Agent ripped my heart? It is inconceivable!"

And I had stayed away from Cheryl after that. Yet, at times, when I had seen her at a distance, my blood had been stirred, inflamed, and I had struggled vainly to suppress that illicit yearning for her body.

And now, here she was right at my side again, so close that I could touch her.

I looked into her eyes.

"Hello, Cheryl. You're as beautiful as ever."

And I felt that treacherous, overwhelming appetite sweep through me again--unchecked--and wondered how it was possible

when I loved Agra so. And then I remembered her vicious, secret coupling with Amdur Cutcheon, the Minister of Aesthetics. Ah! that would make it easier for me, of course, to let go, to permit this violent emotion to run roughshod, to yield to the impulse to take Cheryl to bed--anywhere--tonight. It gave me an excuse, didn't it? Naturally. An unimpeachable, irresistible excuse.

But then I turned cold. Was this one of those tests, those challenges, Roonif had said I would have to face in this life-experience, to pay a debt to my karma, to balance a cowardice, a betrayal of Agra's trust during our marriage of a former incarnation?

"Have you been painting yourself lately?" I asked.

"No." She smiled at me with bold, fearless provocation. "But I have been having some amazing results in clairvoyance experiments. Why not drop in this evening. I can sensitize the adult screen to outer space entities almost twice as fast as before."

I saw the voluptuous and magnetic figure of my wife in my mind. I felt the glory of her embrace, the rapture of that sexual climax which was much longer than that of previous worlds and as close to unmitigated paradise as any mortal experience could be. And I sensed all that which had been mine alone being seized, kissed, slobbered over, penetrated, and consumed by that monster, that monstrous bastard, Amdur Cutcheon.

Fury enveloped me. The heat of lust, released, slashed and pounded in my throat, my brain. I grew dazed and weak. In the savagery of my predatory desire, my vision actually blurred; I reeled slightly.

"Tonight . . .," I said, "I'll . . . Yes, . . . It would be . . ."

Then I paused. Into my mind rose the noble face and form of Roonif Pardock. And I heard his voice warning me: "a test . . . a challenge." And I heard my own voice again, preaching to Grayson about his cruelties to weaker creatures, his capitulation to bitter, shameful evil, his crime against the moral order of Unaria and the Universe. And here I was, about to . . .!

Holy God! The hypocrisy gagged me--the

hideous mockery of my righteousness, my claim to a code, the common self-mastery, the god-like transcendence of humans in these villages where Christ himself had visited and walked and would walk again.

A horror now smote my spirit, my body, a self-loathing that loosened my knees and made me put out my hand for a support that was not there. Sleep with Cheryl tonight! Repay Agra well! Defy and spit on Amdur! Declare my own independence, pleasure, and pride, or hold to integrity, the laws I had been trained in and loved--hold to the faith in ultimate goodness, restoration of perfect harmony with Agra, to the teachings of our supernal, hallowed community?

I stared at Cheryl's small, ravishingly delectable body; I stared into her clear, nakedly passionate eyes. And then I drew

away; I averted my eyes and muttered something unintelligible, and wheeled. Then I hurried; I almost ran along the street.

Just once I glanced back at Cheryl. And as I did so, I glimpsed someone recoiling into the shadow between two buildings, someone who had obviously been observing Cheryl and me throughout our conversation. And I knew her face, and terror sealed my being, and my scalp grew icy.

I groped and stumbled as I ran on, whipped, battered by dread and incredulity.

Agra! She had seen! And, of course, now she knew all; she was ultra-keen-and-perceptive, anyway, and she would certainly sense something between Cheryl and me, the fact that there was intimacy and guilt.

Half paralyzed, I reached my office and sank into a chair. For an hour I sat in a trance of shock, helplessness, despair. Daylight receded from the room, and I was in a drab, soundless gloom that seemed to symbolize imminent death, a burial alive.

The next day I left the house early. I could not bear to remain where Agra was. A horrible desire to commit violence, to destroy some life, any life, whipped my vitals.

"I can see now," I muttered, "why people used to hunt. It relieved the unspeakable poisons of their ill-starred, maladjusted lives."

In the fields near the Institute of Economics--for every public building was surrounded, as was every private dwelling, with ample fields or woods to preserve our awareness of and closeness to nature, the source of life--I saw rabbits, mice, and pheasants eating Negavit. I paused to listen. I could not, of course, gather all the details of their conversation, but by sharp tuning-in of the inner ear, I caught the impulse, the vibratory meanings of their animal brain and will.

"We are now learning to stimulate the other members of the study group," a rabbit remarked. "We no longer think of our separate gains and perceptions."

And a pheasant replied: "Yes, and in community affairs the family now considers another and plans sport and reflection and mutual encouragement according to varied conditions and needs."

"It's an amazing thing," said the rabbit. "It's what the humans call a state of higher consciousness, and it's what they have had and inspired us to find, through their sympathy, generosity, and humane research in communication. They instilled in us their confidence, their faith in our capacities; and all their methods of repetition of right

concentration, basic thought, optimism, creative will formed in us the first higher optimism, creative will, and consciousness."

"Yes," a mouse remarked, "that's it: the fresh awareness and soul identity we have evolved to--and largely because of people's great patience with us in observation, compassion, and communication."

As I walked on, deeply gratified by what I had heard, I reflected: "Yes . . . the higher consciousness, it is that which all forms of life are developing now, along with us, thanks to Christ's grace and our abolition of the machine, complexity, science, computerism, and power-thinking--the arrogant concept that we should conquer the earth, and all the evils, degradations, and horrors that released, rather than the submission to and harmonizing with nature and Christ's will, which we now practice.

Now we learn together, humble pioneers with all earth's children, along the moral frontiers Christ has assigned us. In truth, the lion is lying down with the lamb."

In the long corridors of the Institute of Economics, it was very quiet. The office of Ratiche, the Director of Economics, was at the end of the building, on the fourth floor, and as I walked noiselessly along the narrow, carpeted way between the closed doors, I heard the sound of voices coming from a room on my right, reaching me in spite of the door's being shut. Something about the tone of the voices made me pause.

I recognized Grayson speaking: ". . . they let me out for today . . . to prepare my defense. Nocerne, you realize as I do that this mad, ambitionless, gutless society has to crack. More and more people will experiment with food other than Negavit; more and more will try to regain our old sciences, technocracy, mechanical skills, and powers. Once people have tasted domination of the earth--as they did long ago--no efforts at forced control or abolition can be permanently successful. We have to revolt!"

Then came the voice of Nocerne, the rebel economist, an assistant to Ratiche, who believed that Unaria should revert to free enterprise, the use of money again, the rebuilding of the old order of materialism: "You may be right, Grayson. I've often

thought that violence would be the only way out. No regime ever yields to change voluntarily. The Unaria scheme was possible only because of the Holocaust. The violence of that took the place of the usual armed force that overthrows the vested interests and Establishment structure of privilege and production. The disappearance of old, familiar blueprints, formulae, industrial savvy, the obliteration of crowded centers, machines, factories with all their pollution, laboratories with all their atrocities--the elimination of all this made a perfect opening for the idealists to pour through--and they have. But now, perhaps a comparable violence must crush the fuzzy-brained dictators and restore reason and science to rulership again."

Nocerne's voice was heavy, rich, resonant. One could almost feel the walls of the corridor vibrate. He was a man of tremendous strength and soul force, very popular with all kinds of people. He could hold an audience of thousands hypnotized.

"But how can we do it?" Grayson asked. "Where would we find the allies? How could we assemble the troops to over-run the centers, proclaim authority, and hold control in the face of the massive reaction of the supporters of Unaria?"

"I believe," said Nocerne, "that we have more with us than we realize. People are weary of the foggy dreams, the childish pap, the cowardly self-annihilation of the human race. They want the old aggressiveness and pride again, the old incentives for rank, prestige, and money.

Now they have nothing to live for, except the respect of neighbors--and respect is such a dull, tiresome thing. Let's create the old excitement of Big Production, capitalist expansion and domination, horse-racing, drugs, bull-fighting, striptease, and prostitution. Now we are stodgy, dead. Let's get back to the excitement of living, the magnetism and thrill and risk of gambling, night-life, privilege in high places to strive for!"

"You're right! Right!" exclaimed Grayson. "But how do we proceed! Any move to gather backing would be detected and snuffed out."

"No." I could hear Nocerne tapping

impatiently with his pencil, and visualized his huge, beefy face, his squat, hunched, rhinoceros-like figure. "No, I think I have the solution. Your trial."

"My trial?"

"Yes. It will draw crowds. You are popular, and your arrest, your reassertion of the old values of research and the use of lower life, the putting of all other creatures once more in their proper place--below humankind and unimportant in comparison with our needs and progress, to be rightly subjugated, exploited, tortured, if need be--all this has made you a symbol of the rational, security, and growth once more, and the might of Science.

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"You have become for them a symbol of their hope for the old commodities of conven-

ience and luxury, the chance to experiment with animals once more, for better drugs, so that they can, perhaps, extend their lifetime another year or two."

Grayson cleared his throat.

"But what about the new techniques they used so extensively and successfully before the Holocaust: tissue cultures, electronic microscopes, computer models? They were taking the place of live animals."

"But there are some experiments where nothing takes the place of the living organism--at least, according to my theories."

"True," said Grayson. "But what if I am the symbol of these things? That isn't going to automatically make the people revolt, overwhelm the judge, march on the cultural centers all over the country, set up a new regime."

"No. But there is a new angle, a fresh development you haven't heard of."

"Yes?"

"Hovar has returned from his latest trip to Baylel and adjacent nebulae. He has brought with him something astonishingly different--and effective."

"What?"

Nocerme lowered his voice, and the pencil rapped more sharply and quickly on the glass-topped table.

"A meat-eater."

"A meat-eater?"

"Yes. A man from a human species from Laudinor, a planet between here and Baylel. This creature has always depended almost exclusively on meat. And he is a magnificent specimen: tall, over seven feet, broad, muscular--with flashing teeth and eyes, ruddy, super-healthy cheeks, congenial, cheerful manner."

"But his mere presence alone is not enough to precipitate Unaria-wide outbreaks, the overthrow of our order."

"Ah, but there is something about his presence I have not yet divulged."

"Which is . . .?"

"The vitality impact. He radiates an extraordinary power--a physical intensity that engulfs one, uplifts and stimulates, and excites unbearably."

"But why is this desirable?"

"You must remember," Nocerme said gravely, sardonically, "that we have been blessed by no liquors, drugs, or intoxicants for long years. But that does not mean that the psyche, the deep body-cells have lost the appetite for pleasurable agitation, feverish excess, license, the lewd and libertarian. And this man will evoke all the old tendencies again just by the emanation of his tremendous carnality, lust, and craving. These are created by the meat diet, and they are what made sex so palatable and profitable in our former culture; they will awaken the thirst for license and lechery--and a great tide of joy, of liberation will sweep over the courtroom, over all who feel the avalanche of his impact, the great, magnetic, physical mastery. It will not stop there but leap from community to community, an atomic arc and ultra-consciousness, a super-sensory electronic compulsion such as we have discovered exists here in especially exhilarated religious moods, the adoration of worship, but which we control. In this case, we'll loose it."

"But won't Hovar, Ratiche, and the other authorities know the danger of his appearance at the trial?"

"Perhaps. But they will not expect him at the trial."

"Ah!"

"There are ways of getting him there, influence, bribery."

Up the corridor, a door opened; a woman secretary emerged. I hastened on, shaken, numbed by what I had overheard. My God, to let these vicious criminals destroy that labor of the years, this Blessed Kingdom! But what a Providential mercy that I had overheard!

I didn't say anything at once to Ratiche about the plot. Instead, I left the Institute of Economics building and hurried to the Extra-Sensory Refuge. Here, I entered one of the small Thought Boxes, attached the electrovisual headgear and sank into a complete reverie.

At first, I did not see any contact image; the fever of my astonishment and rage at what I had discovered still gripped me. But then, I began to relax fully, and now I saw the face of Hovar. He was moving through space somewhere on one of his frequent interplanetary journeys--those releases which only a super-developed person could achieve in the ships reserved for the ultra-mature. I saw his face and tried to draw his thought.

"Hovar," I said, "this plot . . ."

And I outlined it quickly.

"What can I do about it?" I asked.

I saw his face turn toward me; a smile touched his lips. And as I moved the needle on my control button, I felt the heat in my solar-plexus, and Hovar's thoughts came through dazzlingly, vibrantly, making my body tingle.

"You must act quickly. Switch to Agra."

The words came, scintillating, pulsing from Hovar's mind. And then they were repeated: "You must act quickly. Switch to Agra."

I swung my conscious mind to my wife. And as her face came through, pale and still and beautiful, I advanced the control needle again, and I heard her words: "It's now. You must enter now. It is the moment. Now, you must experience the climax."

And even as I heard these words, I saw Ander Cutcheon hastening toward our home.

My flesh sickened, my mind darkened.

She was calling, not to me, but to the man who had displaced me--the Minister of Aesthetics, ruthless and soulless, who had made me the foremost cuckold of all time. I could see the luminous quality of Ander's face, that intense anticipation, and, as my gaze swung back to Agra, an equal brightness and longing in hers.

Though revolted to the point of enervation, total weakness, I forced myself to rise to my feet. I tore off the headgear, flung myself from the building, and raced along the quiet roads toward home. As I approached, I saw that the curtains of our bedroom windows, Agra's and mine, had been drawn, and I was struck by such an overwhelming blow of horror and incredulity that I collapsed at the roadside, my face in my hands.

"Agra! For God's sake! How could you ever bring yourself to it? What did I do? What did I do?"

At length, I summoned strength enough to rise and walk to the house. Breathing swiftly and shallowly, I opened the front door, ascended the stairs, and went down the hallway toward the bedroom.

I did not know what I would do, nor did I care. I might do nothing, just stare and then turn away. Perhaps I would be overcome by the ludicrous grotesqueness of the scene, the diabolical humor, and would roar with merriment.

At the door, I paused then swung about and went to the attic stairway. Why not see as well as hear what was happening? I asked myself in a paroxysm of blind, sadistic hate. Maybe I could tap on the glass at the crucial

instant, make them suffer at least the agony of embarrassment. But would a couple so inhuman and crude be capable of shame? I doubted it.

Having climbed to the attic, I tip-toed to a window opening onto a roof, descended the roof till I came to a window of the bedroom. There I crouched, peering around the window-frame.

Ander Cutcheon was facing Agra. He had removed his coat and shirt and undershirt, and in trousers only held his arms out to her. Agra, meanwhile, had disrobed to her chemise and looked at Ander expectantly.

Now, I thought, she will get her revenge for what she saw the other day, that conversation with Cheryl which exposed our intimacy and implied even more than has actually ever occurred, suggested, no doubt, a consummate sexual relationship. She has every right to want revenge on the basis of what she saw, and I should have gone to her and explained that my little flare-up with Cheryl--which fell far short of being bedded--was now only artificially revived through my fury at her, my jealousy of Ander, is, in truth, extinct.

In awe and bitter, nauseous helplessness, I watched the two step toward each other. And then they stopped, breathing deeply, and facing each other. For several minutes they remained motionless like this, and then suddenly Agra exclaimed: "It's enough, Ander. The test is met. Neither of us will yield."

He nodded gravely. And she said: "I sent him the message, through Hovar, and I sense him near. I knew that he would come to watch. And he is . . ." She hesitated, turned abruptly toward the window, and pointed at me. ". . . there!" she cried. And then: "Doan! Come in here. You have witnessed the climax I meant, not the erotic one you anticipated."

Stunned, bewildered, I had pulled back from my vantage point near the window, and now I re-entered the attic, came down the stairs, and confronted them in the bedroom. They were both smiling, wholly and elatedly innocent looking.

"What in hell is this all about?" I cried. "Are you insane? Is this some dramatic stunt?"

Now they were laughing.

"No," Agra said, and she came over to me and slid an arm about me and gazed into my face with that sweetness and adoration and sensual-spiritual surrender that was so familiar, that had fired my blood on so many an ecstatic occasion. "We have been playing out a drama of integrity, of Unarian virtue and principle."

"What do you mean?"

"We knew about your relationship with Cheryl," Ander said. "We knew that it had stopped short of the serious stage, but it was to a limited extent a betrayal of Agra, an insult to your mutual love. She had a right to want revenge."

"And yet, according to Unaria's laws, what was the correct response I should have shown?" Agra asked me.

I looked at her, baffled.

"You mean . . .?" A sharp illumination stabbed my mind. "You mean . . . you're thinking of the unsurpassable charity, forgiveness for the theft of love?"

"Exactly." Agra embraced me even more closely and kissed my cheek. "It was to be the supreme test of my own love, our love. Ander and I have been physically attracted to each other, as you and Cheryl were. And so we planned to be together--often--to deliberately tempt and titillate each other to the extreme limit of our powers of resistance, control, and integrity. We wanted to see how successful our New Chivalric Age really is. We made our association as close and personal and sensually exciting as we could. But we never succumbed, and we never even kissed. And then I saw you with Cheryl again the other day, and I was tempted even more actually to engage in erotic dalliance with Ander."

"But it was precisely at that point that I realized that I had to summon the greatest degree of love I had for you, the fullest, most mature loyalty, the capacity to forgive, reject carnal indulgence, and temper the steel of our attachment, our indestructible, immortal romance which, as Roonif Pardock said, has grown and deepened through many previous lives and will flourish in some form for many to come."

"Then it was all planned; it was deliberate."

"Yes, darling. I knew that the best way to hold you was to prove that I had one of Unaria's supreme qualities, the character to reject any and all evil, even the most seductive one which you had, to some extent at least, yielded to: sex.

"And so, Ander and I decided that today we would arrange the ultimate moment of temptation and, hopefully, the finest victory, the most conclusive proof that we are genuine Unarians: we would partially undress and seek to arouse each other by look and gesture. It would be the climax. In the telepathic message I sent you . . ."

"That's what you meant by climax!" I cried. "And I, of course, thought that you meant the moment of sexual climax with Ander and that you were so brutal now, so dehumanized and sadistic, that you wanted me, literally, to observe your love-making, passion, orgasm."

As the tension washed out and relief and joy took over, the three of us descended to the living room and dropped into easy chairs.

"And now," I said, "that you have proven that you can never be derailed from your devotion to me, sweetheart, and I have convinced you that my infatuation with Cheryl is dead and that the other day I was motivated solely by my rage at you for what I thought was a real affair with Ander--now that we've cleared the air at least and can face each other, all three, as mature, faithful-triumphant Unarians, what can we do about the next predicament, an even bigger test?"

And I described to them the plot to kindle revolution at the time of the trial and to precipitate the complete overthrow of Unaria's neo-Christian Regime, with its long and arduous heritage of training in Christ-consciousness, the equal sacredness of all things.

Agra and Ander were silent for a while. Then Agra said: "Grayson and Nocerne will have influence, it is true. They may be able to influence some of the lesser citizens, those few inhibited, self-centered, debased

humans still hungering for the Ancient Era. But I don't think that they can arouse a force capable of destroying the rule of sanity and love and of re-establishing the society of mass horrors and cruelties, greed and arrogance and exploitation. I think that the effort will fail, even with this meat-eating prodigy they will unveil to inspire revolt,

to electrify the citizens far and wide by vibrant waves and mystic frequencies that release miraculous faculties.

"I think that we can do some conspiring and manipulating of our own with that Meat-Eater from another planet. If one faction can buy him, so perhaps can another, especially if the pay-off is bigger. There are other incentives, as we all know, persuasive and extra-terrestrial."

(To be concluded in the next issue.)