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Think BLUE, Count TWO

*Space was deadly. Many who
dared it died. Others were
less fortunate—they lived!*

by CORDWAINER SMITH

I

Before the great ships whispered between the stars by means of planofforming, people had to fly from star to star with immense sails—huge films assorted in space on long, rigid, cold-proof rigging. A small space-boat provided room for a sailor to handle the sails, check the course and watch the passengers who were sealed, like knots in immense threads, in their little adiabatic pods which trailed behind the ship. The passengers knew nothing, except for going to sleep on earth and waking up on a strange new world forty, fifty or two hundred years later.

This was a primitive way to do it. But it worked.

On such a ship Helen America had followed Mr. Gray-no-more. On such ships the Scanners retained their ancient authority over space. Two hundred planets and more were settled in this fashion, including Old North Australia, destined to be the treasure house of them all.

The Emigration Port was a series of low, square buildings—nothing like Earthport, which towers above the clouds like a frozen nuclear explosion.

Emigration Port is dour, drab, dreary and efficient. The walls are black-red like old blood merely because they are cheaper to heat that way. The rockets are ugly and simple; the rocket pits, as inglorious as machine shops. Earth has a few show places to tell visitors about. Emigration Port is not one of them. The people who work there get the privilege of real work and secure professional honors. The people who go there become unconscious very soon. What they remember about earth is a little room like a hospital room, a little bed, some music, some talk, the sleep and (perhaps) the cold.

From Emigration Port they go to their pods, sealed in. The pods go to the rockets and these to the sailing ship. That's the old way of doing it.

The new way is better. All a person does now is visit a pleasant lounge, or play a game of cards, or eat a meal or two. All he needs is half the wealth of a planet, or a couple hundred years' seniority marked "excellent" without a single break.

The photonic sails were different. Everyone took chances.

A young man, bright of skin and hair, merry at heart, set out for a new world. An older man, his hair touched with gray, went with him. So, too, did thirty thousand others. And also, the most beautiful girl on earth.

Earth could have kept her, but the new worlds needed her.

She had to go.

She went by light-sail ship. And she had to cross space—space, where the danger always waits.

Space sometimes commands strange tools to its uses—the screams of a beautiful child, the laminated brain of a long-dead mouse, the heartbroken weeping of a computer. Most space offers no respite, no relay, no rescue, no repair. All dangers must be anticipated; otherwise they become mortal. And the greatest of all hazards is the risk of man himself.

"She's beautiful," said the first technician.

"She's just a child," said the second.

"She won't look like much of a child when they're two hundred years out," said the first.

"But she *is* a child," said the second, smiling, "a beautiful doll with blue eyes, just going tiptoe into the beginnings of grown-up life." He sighed.

"She'll be frozen," said the first.

"Not all the time," said the second. "Sometimes they wake up. They have to wake up. The machines de-freeze them. You remember the crimes on the *Old Twenty-two*. Nice people, but the wrong combinations. And everything went wrong, dirtily, brutally wrong."

They both remembered *Old Twenty-two*. The hell-ship had drifted between the stars for a long time before its beacon brought rescue. Rescue was much too late.

The ship was in immaculate condition. The sails were set at a correct angle. The thousands of frozen sleepers, strung out behind the ship in their one-body adiabatic pods, would have been in excellent condition, but they had merely been left in open space too long and most of them had spoiled. The inside of the ship—there was the trouble. The sailor had failed or died. The reserve passengers had been awakened. They did not get on well with one another. Or else they got on too horribly well, in the wrong way. Out between the stars, encased only by a frail limited cabin, they had invented new crimes and committed them upon each other—crimes which a million years of earth's old wickedness had never brought to the surface of man before.

The investigators of *Old Twenty-two* had become very sick, reconstructing the events that followed the awakening of the reserve crew. Two of them had asked for blanking and had obviously retired from service.

The two technicians knew all about *Old Twenty-two* as they watched the fifteen-year-old woman sleeping on the table. Was she a woman? Was she a girl? What would happen to her if she did wake up on the flight?

She breathed delicately.

The two technicians looked across her figure at one another and then the first one said:

"We'd better call the psychological guard. It's a job for him."

"He can try," said the second.

The psychological guard, a man whose number-name ended in the digits Tiga-belas, came cheerfully into the room a half-hour later. He was a dreamy-looking old man, sharp and alert, probably in his fourth rejuvenation. He looked at the beautiful girl on the table and inhaled sharply,

"What's this for—a ship?"

"No," said the first technician, "it's a beauty contest."

"Don't be a fool," said the psychological guard. "You mean they are really sending that beautiful child into the Up-and-Out?"

"It's stock," said the second technician. "The people out on Wereld Schemering are running dreadfully ugly, and they flashed a sign to the Big Blink that they had to have better-looking people. The Instrumentality is doing right by them. All the people on this ship are handsome or beautiful."

"If she's that precious, why don't they freeze her and put her in a pod? That way she would either get there or she would not. A face as pretty as that," said Tiga-belas, "could start trouble anywhere. Let alone a ship. What's her name-number?"

"On the board there," said the first technician. "It's all on the board there. You'll want the others too. They're listed, too, and ready to go on the board."

"Veeseey-koosey," read the psychological guard, saying the words aloud, "or five-six. That's a silly name, but it's rather cute." With one last look back at the sleeping girl, he bent to his work of reading the case histories of the people added to the reserve crew. Within ten lines, he saw why the girl was being kept ready for emergencies, instead of sleeping the whole trip through. She had a Daughter Potential of 999.999, meaning that any normal adult of either sex could and would accept her as a daughter after a few minutes of relationship. She had no skill in herself, no learning, no trained capacities. But she could re-motivate almost anyone older than herself, and she showed a probability of making that re-motivated person put up a gigantic fight for life. For her sake. And secondarily the adopter's.

That was all, but it was special enough to put her in the cabin. She had tested out into the literal truth of the ancient poetic scrap, "the fairest of the daughters of old, old earth."

When Tiga-belas finished taking his notes from the records, the working time was almost over. The technicians had not interrupted him. He turned around to look one last time at the lovely girl. She was gone. The second technician had left and the first was cleaning his hands.

"You haven't frozen her?" cried Tiga-belas. "I'll have to fix her too, if the safeguard is to work."

"Of course you do," said the first technician. "We've left you two minutes for it."

"You give me two minutes," said Tiga-belas, "to protect a trip of four hundred and fifty years!"

"Do you need more," said the technician, and it was not even a question, except in form.

"Do I?" said Tiga-belas. He broke into a smile. "No, I don't. That girl will be safe long after I am dead."

"When do you die?" said the technician, socially.

"Seventy-three years, two months, four days," said Tiga-belas agreeably. "I'm a fourth-and-last."

"I thought so," said the technician. "You're smart. Nobody starts off that way. We all learn. I'm sure you'll take care of that girl."

They left the laboratory together and ascended to the surface and the cool restful night of Earth.

II

Late the next day, Tiga-belas came in, very cheerful indeed. In his left hand he held a drama spool, full commercial size. In his right hand there was a black plastic cube with shimmering silver contact-points gleaming on its sides. The two technicians greeted him politely.

The psychological guard could not hide his excitement and his pleasure.

"I've got that beautiful child taken care of. The way she is going to be fixed, she'll keep her Daughter Potential, but it's going to be a lot closer to one thousand point double zero than it was with all those nines. I've used a mouse-brain."

"If it's frozen," said the first technician, "we won't be able to put it in the computer. It will have to go forward with the emergency stores."

"This brain isn't frozen," said Tiga-belas indignantly. "It's been laminated. We stiffened it with cellulprime and then we veneered it down, about seven thousand layers. Each one has plastic of at least two molecular thicknesses. This mouse can't spoil. As a matter of fact, this mouse is going to go on thinking forever. He won't think much, unless we put the voltage on him, but he'll think. And he can't spoil. This is ceramic plastic, and it would take a major weapon to break it."

"The contacts...?" said the second technician.

"They don't go through," said Tiga-belas. "This mouse is tuned into that girl's personality, up to a thousand meters. You can put him anywhere in the ship. The case has been hardened. The contacts are just attached on the outside. They feed to nickel-steel counterpart contacts on the inside. I told you, this mouse is going to be thinking when the last human being on the last known planet is dead. And it's going to be thinking about that girl. Forever."

"Forever is an awfully long time," said the first technician, with a shiver. "We only need a safety period of two thousand years. The girl herself would spoil in less than a thousand years, if anything did go wrong."

"Never you mind," said Tiga-belas, "that girl is going to be guarded whether she is spoiled or not." He spoke to the cube. "You're going along with Veesey, fellow, and if she is an *Old Twenty-two* you'll turn the whole thing into a toddle-garden frolic complete with ice cream and hymns to the West Wind." Tiga-belas looked up at the other men and said, quite unnecessarily, "He can't hear me."

"Of course not," said the first technician, very dryly.

They all looked at the cube. It was a beautiful piece of engineering. The psychological guard had reason to be proud of it.

"Do you need the mouse any more?" said the first technician.

"Yes," said Tiga-belas. "One-third of a millisecond at forty megadynes. I want him to get her whole life printed on his left cortical lobe. Particularly her screams. She screamed badly at ten months. Something she got in her mouth. She screamed at ten when she thought the air had stopped in her drop-shaft. It hadn't, or she wouldn't be here. They're in her record. I want the mouse to have those screams. And she had a pair of

red shoes for her fourth birthday. Give me the full two minutes with her. I've printed the key on the complete series of *Marcia and the Moon Men*—that was the best box drama for teen-age girls that they ran last year. Veeseey saw it. This time she'll see it again, but the mouse will be tied in. She won't have the chance of a snowball in hell of forgetting it."

Said the first technician, "What was that?"

"Huh?" said Tiga-belas.

"What was that you just said, that, at the end?"

"Are you deaf?"

"No," said the technician huffily. "I just didn't understand what you meant."

"I said that she would not have the chance of a snowball in hell of forgetting it."

"That's what I thought you said," replied the technician. "What is a snowball? What is hell? What sort of chances do they make?"

The second technician interrupted eagerly. "I know," he explained. "Snowballs are ice formations on Neptune. Hell is a planet out near Khufu VII. I don't know how anybody would get them together."

Tiga-belas looked at them with the weary amazement of the very old. He did not feel like explaining, so he said gently:

"Let's leave the literature till another time. All I meant was, Veeseey will be safe when she's cued into this mouse. The mouse will outlast her and everybody else, and no teen-age girl is going to forget *Marcia and the Moon Men*. Not when she saw every single episode twice over. This girl did."

"She's not going to render the other passengers ineffectual? That wouldn't help," said the first technician.

"Not a bit," said Tiga-belas.

"Give me those strengths again," said the first technician.

"Mouse—one-third millisecond at forty megadynes."

"They'll hear that way beyond the moon," said the technician. "You can't put that sort of stuff into people's heads without a permit. Do you want us to get a special permit from the Instrumentality?"

"For one-third of a millisecond?"

The two men faced each other for a moment; then the technician began creasing his forehead, his mouth began to smile and they both laughed. The second technician did not understand it and Tiga-belas said to him:

"I'm putting the girl's whole lifetime into one-third of a millisecond at top power. It will drain over into the mouse-brain inside this cube. What is the normal human reaction within one-third millisecond?"

"Fifteen milliseconds—" The second technician started to speak and stopped himself.

"That's right," said Tiga-belas. "People don't get anything at all in less than fifteen milliseconds. This mouse isn't only veneered and laminated; he's fast. The lamination is faster than his own synapses ever were. Bring on the girl."

The first technician had already gone to get her.

The second technician turned back for one more question. "Is the mouse dead?"

"No. Yes. Of course not. What do you mean? Who knows?" said Tiga-belas all in one breath.

The younger man stared but the couch with the beautiful girl had already rolled into the room. Her skin had chilled down from pink to ivory and her respiration was no longer visible to the naked eye, but she was still beautiful. The deep freezing had not yet begun.

The first technician began to whistle. "Mouse—forty megadynes, one-third of a millisecond. Girl, output maximum, same time. Girl input, two minutes, what volume?"

"Anything," said Tiga-belas. "Anything. Whatever you use for deep personality engraving."

"Set," said the technician.

"Take the cube," said Tiga-belas.

The technician took it and fitted it into the coffin-like box near the girl's head.

"Good-bye, immortal mouse," said Tiga-belas, "think about the beautiful girl when I am dead and don't get too tired of *Marcia and the Moon Men* when you've seen it for a million years..."

"Record," said the second technician. He took it from Tiga-belas and put it into a standard drama-shower, but one with output cables heavier than any home had ever installed.

"Do you have a code word?" said the first technician.

"It's a little poem," said Tiga-belas. He reached in his pocket. "Don't read it aloud. If any of us misspoke a word, there is a chance she might hear it and it would heterodyne the relationship between her and the laminated mouse."

The two looked at a scrap of paper. In clear, archaic writing there appeared the lines:

Lady if a man
Tries to bother you, you can
 Think blue,
 Count two,
And look for a red shoe.

The technicians laughed warmly. "That'll do it," said the first technician.

Tiga-belas gave them an embarrassed smile of thanks.

"Turn them both on," he said. "Good-by, girl," he murmured to himself. "Good-by, mouse. Maybe I'll see you in seventy-four years."

The room flashed with a kind of invisible light inside their heads.

In moon orbit a navigator wondered about his mother's red shoes.

Two million people on earth started to count "one-two" and then wondered why they had done so.

A bright young parakeet, in an orbital ship, began reciting the whole verse and baffled the crew as to what the meaning might be.

Apart from this, there were no side effects.

The girl in the coffin arched her body with terrible strain. The electrodes had scorched the skin at her temples. The scars stood bright red against the chilled fresh skin of the girl.

The cube showed no sign from the dead-live live-dead mouse.

While the second technician put ointment on Veese's scars, Tiga-belas put on a headset and touched the terminals of the cube very gently without moving it from the snap-in position it held in the coffin-shaped box.

He nodded, satisfied. He stepped back.

"You're sure the girl got it?"

"We'll read it back before she goes to deep-freeze."

"*Marcia and the Moon Men*, what?"

"Can't miss it," said the first technician. "I'll let you know if there's anything missing. There won't be."

Tiga-belas took one last look at the lovely, lovely girl. Seventy-three years, two months, three days, he thought to himself. And she, beyond Earth rules, may be awarded a thousand years. And the mouse-brain has got a million years.

Veesey never knew any of them—neither the first technician, nor the second technician, nor Tiga-belas, the psychological guard.

To the day of her death, she knew that *Marcia and the Moon Men* had included the most wonderful blue lights, the hypnotic count of "one-two, one two" and the prettiest red shoes that any girl had seen on or off earth.

III

Three hundred and twenty-six years later she had to wake up.

Her box had opened.

Her body ached in every muscle and nerve.

The ship was screaming emergency and she had to get up.

She wanted to sleep, to sleep, or to die.

The ship kept screaming.

She had to get up.

She lifted an arm to the edge of her coffin-bed. She had practiced getting in and out of the bed in the long training period, before they sent her underground to be hypnotized and frozen. She knew just what to reach for, just what to expect. She pulled herself over on her side. She opened her eyes.

The lights were yellow and strong. She closed her eyes again.

This time a voice sounded from somewhere near her. It seemed to be saying, "Take the straw in your mouth."

Veesey groaned.

The voice kept on saying things.

Something scratchy pressed against her mouth.

She opened her eyes.

The outline of a human head had come between her and the light.

She squinted, trying to see if it might be one more of the doctors. No, this was the ship.

The face came into focus.

It was the face of a very handsome and very young man. His eyes looked into hers. She had never seen anyone who was both handsome and sympathetic, quite the way that he was. She tried to see him clearly, and found herself beginning to smile.

The drinking-tube thrust past her lips and teeth. Automatically she sucked at it. The fluid was something like soup, but it had a medicinal taste too.

The face had a voice. "Wake up," he said, "wake up. It doesn't do any good to hold back now. You need some exercise as soon as you can manage it."

She let the tube slip from her mouth and gasped, "Who are you?"

"Trece," he said, "and that's Talatashar over there. We've been up for two months, recueing the robots. We need your help."

"Help," she murmured, "my help?"

Trece's face wrinkled and crinkled in a delightful grin. "Well, we sort of needed you. We really do need a third mind to watch the robots when we think we've fixed them. And besides, we're lonely. Talatashar and I aren't much company to each other. We looked over the list of reserve crew and we decided to wake you." He reached out a friendly hand to her.

When she sat up she saw the other man, Talatashar. She immediately recoiled: she had never seen anyone so ugly. His hair was gray and cropped. Piggy little eyes peered out of eye-sockets which looked flooded with fat. His cheeks hung down in monstrous jowls on either side. On

top of all that, his face was lop-sided. One side seemed wide-awake but the other was twisted in an endless spasm which looked like agony. She could not help putting her hand to her mouth. And it was with the back of her hand against her lips that she spoke.

"I thought—I thought everybody on this ship was supposed to be handsome."

One side of Talatashar's face smiled at her while the other half stayed with its expression of frozen hurt.

"We were," his voice rumbled, and it was not of itself an unpleasant voice, "we all were. Some of us always get spoiled in the freezing. It will take you a while to get used to me." He laughed grimly. "It took me a while to get used to me. In two months, I've managed. Pleased to meet you. Maybe you'll be pleased to meet me, after a while. What do you think of that, eh, Trece?"

"What?" said Trece, who had watched them both with friendly worry.

"The girl. So tactful. The direct diplomacy of the very young. Was I handsome, she said. No, say I. What is she, anyhow?"

Trece turned to her. "Let me help you sit," he said.

She sat up on the edge of her box.

Wordlessly he passed the skin of fluid to her with its drinking tube, and she went back to sucking her broth. Her eyes peered up at the two men like the eyes of a small child. They were as innocent and troubled as the eyes of a kitten which has met worry for the first time.

"What are you?" said Trece.

She took her lips away from the tube for a moment. "A girl," she said.

Half of Talatashar's face smiled a sophisticated smile. The other half moved a little with muscular drag, but expressed nothing. "We see that," said he, grimly.

"He means," said Trece conciliatorily, "what have you been trained for?"

She took her mouth away again. "Nothing," said she.

The men laughed—both of them. First, Talatashar laughed with all the evil in the world in his voice. Then Trece laughed, and he was too young to laugh his own way. His laughter, too, was cruel. There was something masculine, mysterious, threatening and secret in it, as though he knew all about things which girls could find out only at the cost of pain and humiliation. He was as alien, for the moment, as man have always been from women: filled with secret motives and concealed desires, driven by bright sharp thoughts which women neither had nor wished to have. Perhaps more than his body had spoiled.

There was nothing in Veese's own life to make her fear that laugh, but the instinctive reaction of a million years of womanhood behind her was to disregard the evil, go on the alert for more trouble and hope for the best at the moment. She knew, from books and tapes, all about sex. This laugh had nothing to do with babies or with love. There was contempt and power and cruelty in it—the cruelty of men who are cruel merely because they are men. For an instant she hated both of them, but she was not alarmed enough to set off the trigger of the protective devices which the psychological guard had built into her mind itself. Instead, she looked down the cabin, ten meters long and four meters wide.

This was home now, perhaps forever. There were sleepers somewhere, but she did not see their boxes. All she had was this small space and the two men—Trece with his warm smile, his nice voice, his interesting gray-blue eyes; and Talatashar, with his ruined face. And their laughter. That wretchedly mysterious masculine laughter, hostile and laughing-at in its undertones.

"Life's life," she thought, "and I must live it. Here."

Talatashar, who had finished laughing, now spoke in a very different voice.

"There will be time for the fun and games later. First, we have to get the work done. The photonic sails aren't picking up enough starlight to get us anywhere. The mainsail is ripped by a meteor. We can't repair it, not when it's twenty miles across. So we have to jury-rig the ship—that's the right old word."

"How does it work?" asked Veese sadly, not much interested in her own question. The aches and pains of the long freeze were beginning to bedevil her.

Talatashar said, "It's simple. The sails are coated. We were put into orbit by rockets. The pressure of light is bigger on one side than on the other. With some pressure on one side and virtually no pressure on the other, the ship has to go somewhere. Interstellar matter is very fine and does not give us enough drag to slow us down. The sails pull away from the brightest source of light at any time. For the first eighty years it was the sun. Then we began trying to get both the sun and some bright patches of light behind it. Now we have more light coming at us than we want, and we will be pulled away from destination if we do not point the blind side of the sails at the goal and the pushing sides at the next best source.

The sailor died, for some reason we can't figure out. The ship's automatic mechanism woke us up and the navigation board explained the situation to us. Here we are. We have to fix the robots."

"But what's the matter with them? Why don't they do it themselves? Why did they have to wake up people? They're supposed to be so smart." She particularly wondered, why did they have to wake up *me*? But she suspected the answer—that the men had done it, not the robots—and she did not want to make them say it. She still remembered how their masculine laughter had turned ugly.

"The robots weren't programmed to tear up sails—only to fix them. We've got to condition them to accept the damage that we want to leave, and to go ahead with the new work which we are adding."

"Could I have something to eat?" asked Veeseey.

"Let me get it!" cried Trece.

"Why not?" said Talatashar.

While she ate, they went over the proposed work in detail, the three of them talking it out calmly. Veeseey felt more relaxed. She had the sensation that they were taking her in as a partner.

By the time they completed their work schedules, they were sure it would take between thirty-five and forty-two normal days to get the sails stiffened and re-hung. The robots did the outside work, but the sails were seventy thousand miles long by twenty thousand miles wide.

Forty-two days!

The work was not forty-two days at all.

It was one year and three days before they finished.

The relationships in the cabin had not changed much. Talatashar left her alone except to make ugly remarks. Nothing he had found in the medicine cabinet had made him look any better, but some of the things drugged him so that he slept long and well.

Trece had long since become her sweetheart, but it was such an innocent romance that it might have been conducted on grass, under elms, at the edge of an Earth-side silky river.

Once she had found them fighting and had exclaimed:

"Stop it! Stop it! You can't!"

When they did stop hitting each other, she said wonderingly:

"I thought you *couldn't*. Those boxes. Those safeguards. Those things they put in with us."

And Talatashar said, in a voice of infinite ugliness and finality, "That's what *they* thought. I threw those things out of the ship months ago. Don't want them around."

The effect on Trece was dramatic, as bad as if he had walked into one of the Ancient Unselfing Grounds unaware. He stood utterly still, his eyes wide and his voice filled with fear when, at last, he did speak.

"So—that's—why—we—fought!"

"You mean the boxes? They're gone, all right."

"But," gasped Trece, "each was protected by each one's box. We were all protected—from ourselves. God help us all!"

"What is God?" said Talatashar.

"Never mind. It's an old word. I heard it from a robot. But what are we going to do? What are *you* going to do?" said he accusingly to Talatashar.

"Me," said Talatashar, "I'm doing nothing. Nothing has happened." The working side of his face twisted in a hideous smile.

Veeseey watched both of them.

She did not understand it, but she feared it, that unspecific danger.

Talatashar gave them his ugly, masculine laugh, but this time Trece did not join him. He stared open-mouthed at the other man.

Talatashar put on a show of courage and indifference. "Shift's up," he said, "and I'm turning in." Veeseey nodded and tried to say good night but no words came. She was frightened and inquisitive. Of the two, feeling inquisitive was worse. There were thirty-odd thousand people all around her, but only these two were alive and present. They knew something which she did not know.

Talatashar made a brave show of it by bidding her, "Mix up something special for the big eating tomorrow. Mind you do it, girl."

He climbed into the wall.

When Veeseey turned toward Trece, it was he who fell into her arms.

"I'm frightened," he said. "We can face anything in space, but we can't face us. I'm beginning to think that the sailor killed himself. *His* psychological guard broke down too. And now we're all alone with just us."

Veeseey looked instinctively around the cabin. "It's all the same as before. Just the three of us, and this little room, and the Up-and-Out outside."

"Don't you see it, darling?" He grabbed her by the shoulders. "The little boxes protected us from ourselves. And now there aren't any. We are helpless. There isn't anything here to protect us from us. What hurts man like man? What kills people like people? What danger to us could be more terrible than ourselves?"

She tried to pull away: "It's not that bad."

Without answering he pulled her to him. He began tearing at her clothes. The jacket and shorts, like his own, were omni-textile and fitted tight. She fought him off but she was not the least bit frightened. She was sorry for him, and at this moment the only thing that worried her was that Talatashar might wake up and try to help her. That would be too much.

Trece was not hard to stop.

She got him to sit down and they drifted into the big chair together.

His face was as tear-stained as her own.

That night, they did not make love.

In whispers, in gasps, he told her the story of *Old Twenty-two*. He told her that people poured out among the stars and that the ancient things inside people woke up, so that the deeps of their minds were more terrible than the blackest depth of space. Space never committed crimes. It just killed. Nature could transmit death, but only man could carry crime from world to world. Without the boxes, they looked into the bottomless depths of their own unknown selves.

She did not really understand, but she tried as well as she possibly could.

He went to sleep—it was long after his shift should have ended—murmuring over and over again:

"Veeseey, Veeseey, protect me from me! What can I do now, now, now, so that I won't do something terrible later on? What can I do? *Now* I'm afraid of me, Veeseey, and afraid of *Old Twenty-two*. Veeseey, Veeseey, you've got to save me from me. What can I do now, now, now...?"

She had no answer and after he slept, she slept. The yellow lights burned brightly on them both. The robot-board, reading that no human being was in the "on" position, assumed complete control of the ship and sails.

Talatashar woke them in the morning.

No one that day, nor any of the succeeding days, said anything about the boxes. There was nothing to say.

But the two men watched each other like unrelated beasts and Veeseey herself began watching them in turn. Something wrong and vital had come into the room, some exuberance of life which she had never known existed. It did not smell; she could not see it; she could not reach it with her fingers. It was something real, nevertheless. Perhaps it was what people once called *danger*.

She tried to be particularly friendly to both the men. It made the feeling diminish within her. But Trece became surly and jealous and Talatashar smiled his untruthful lopsided smile.

Danger came to them by surprise.

Talatashar's hands were on her, pulling her out of her own sleeping-box.

She tried to fight but he was as remorseless as an engine.

He pulled her free, turned her around and let her float in the air. She would not touch the floor for a minute or two, and he obviously counted on getting control of her again. As she twisted in the air, wondering what had happened, she saw Trece's eyes rolling as they followed her movement. Only a fraction of a second later did she realize that she saw Trece too. He was tied up with emergency wire, and the wire which bound him was tied to one of the stanchions in the wall. He was more helpless than she.

A cold deep fear came upon her.

"Is this a crime?" she whispered to the empty air. "Is this what crime is, what you are doing to me?"

Talatashar did not answer her, but his hands took a firm terrible grip on her shoulders. He turned her around. She slapped at him. He slapped her back, hitting so hard that her jaw felt like a wound.

She had hurt herself accidentally a few times; the doctor-robots had always hurried to her aid. But no other human being had ever hurt her. Hurting people—why, that wasn't done, except for the games of men! It wasn't done. It couldn't happen. It did.

All in a rush she remembered what Trece had told her about *Old Twenty-two*, and about what happened to people when they lost their own outsides in space and began making up evil from the people-insides which, after a million and more years of becoming human, still followed them everywhere—even into space itself.

This was crime come back to man.

She managed to say it to Talatashar, "You are going to commit crimes? On this ship? With me?"

His expression was hard to read, with half of his face frozen in a perpetual rictus of unfulfilled laughter. They were facing each other now. Her face was feverish from the pain of his slap, but the good side of his face showed no corresponding imprint of pain from having been struck by her. It showed nothing but strength, alertness and a kind of attunement which was utterly and unimaginably wrong.

At last he answered her, and it was as if he wandered among the wonders of his own soul.

"I'm going to do what I please. What *I* please. Do you understand?"

"Why don't you just ask us?" she managed to say. "Trece and I will do anything you want. We're all alone in this little ship, millions of miles from nowhere. Why shouldn't we do what you want? Let him go. And talk to me. We'll do what you want. Anything. You have rights too."

His laugh was close to a crazy scream.

He put his face close to her and hissed at her so sharply that droplets of his spittle sprayed against her cheek and ear.

"I don't want rights!" he shouted at her. "I don't want what's mine. I don't want to do right. Do you think I haven't heard the two of you, night after night, making soft loving sounds when the cabin has gone dark. Why do you think I threw the cubes out of the ship? Why do you think I needed power?"

"I don't know," she said, sadly and meekly. She had not given up hope. As long as he was talking he might talk himself out and become reasonable again. She had heard of robots blowing their circuits, so that they had to be hunted down by other robots. But she had never thought that it might happen to people too.

Talatashar groaned. The history of man was in his groan—the anger at life, which promises so much and gives so little, and despair about time, which tricks man while it shapes him. He sat back on the air and let himself drift toward the floor of the cabin, where the magnetic carpeting drew the silky iron filaments in their clothing.

"You're thinking he'll get over this, aren't you?" said he, speaking of himself.

She nodded.

"You're thinking he'll get reasonable and let both of us alone, aren't you?"

She nodded again.

"You're thinking—Talatashar, he'll get well when we arrive at Wereld Schemering, and the doctors will fix his face, and then we'll all be happy again. That's what you're thinking, isn't it?"

She still nodded. Behind her she heard Trece give a loud groan against his gag, but she did not dare take her eyes off Talatashar and his

spoiled, horrible face.

"Well, it won't be that way, Veeseey," he said. The finality in his voice was almost calm.

"Veeseey, you're not going to get there. I'm going to do what I have to do. I'm going to do things to you that no one ever did in space before, and then I'm going to throw your body out the disposal door. But I'll let Trece watch it all before I kill him too. And then, do you know what I'll do?"

Some strange emotion—it was probably fear—began tightening the muscles in her throat. Her mouth had become dry. She barely managed to croak, "No, I don't know what you'll do then..."

Talatashar looked as though he were staring inward.

"I don't either," said he, "except that it's not something I want to do. I don't want to do it at all. It's cruel and messy and when I get through I won't have you and him to talk to. But this is something I have to do. It's justice, in a strange way. You've got to die because you're bad. And I'm bad too; but if you die, I won't be so bad."

He looked up at her brightly, almost as though he were normal. "Do you know what I'm talking about? Do you understand any of it?"

"No. No. No." Veeseey stammered, but she could not help it.

Talatashar stared not at her but at the invisible face of his crime-to-come and said, almost cheerfully:

"You might as well understand. It's you who will die for it, and then him. Long ago you did me a wrong, a dirty, intolerable wrong. It wasn't the you who's sitting here. You're not big enough or smart enough to do anything as awful as the things that were done to me. It wasn't this you who did it, it was the real, true you instead. And now you are going to be cut and burned and choked and brought back with medicines and cut and choked and hurt again, as long as your body can stand it. And when your body stops, I'm going to put on an emergency suit and shove your dead body out into space with him. He can go out alive, for all I care. Without a suit, he'll last two gasps. And then part of my justice will be done. That's what people have called crime. It's just justice, private justice that comes out of the deep insides of man. Do you understand, Veeseey?"

She nodded. She shook her head. She nodded again. She didn't know how to respond.

"And then there are more things which I'll have to do," he went on, with a sort of purr. "Do you know what there is outside this ship, waiting for my crime?"

She shook her head, and so he answered himself.

"There are thirty thousand people following in their pods behind this ship. I'll pull them in by two and two and I will get young girls. The others I'll throw loose in space. And with the girls I'll find out what it is—what it is I've always had to do, and never knew. Never knew, Veeseey, till I found myself out in space with you."

His voice almost went dreamy as he lost himself in his own thoughts. The twisted side of his face showed its endless laugh, but the mobile side looked thoughtful and melancholy, so that she felt there was something inside him which might be understood, if only she had the quickness and the imagination to think of it.

Her throat still dry, she managed to half-whisper at him:

"Do you hate me? Why do you want to hurt me? Do you hate girls?"

"I don't hate girls," he blazed, "I hate me. Out here in space I found it out. You're not a person. Girls aren't people. They are soft and pretty and cute and cuddly and warm, but they have no feelings. I was handsome before my face spoiled, but that didn't matter. I always knew that girls weren't people. They're something like robots. They have all the power in the world and none of the worry. Men have to obey, men have to beg, men have to suffer, because they are built to suffer and to be sorry and to obey. All a girl has to do is to smile her pretty smile or to cross her pretty legs, and the man gives up everything he has ever wanted and fought for, just to be her slave. And then the girl—" and at this point he got to screaming again, in a high shrill shout—"and then the girl gets to be a woman and she has children, more girls to pester men, more men to be the victims of girls, more cruelty and more slaves. You're so cruel to me, Veeseey! You're so cruel that you don't even know you're cruel. If you'd known how I wanted you, you'd have suffered like a person. But you didn't suffer. You're a girl. Well, you're going to find out now. You will suffer and then you will die. But you won't die until you know how men feel about women."

"Tala," she said, using the nickname they had so rarely used to him, "Tala, that's not so. I never meant you to suffer."

"Of course you didn't," he snapped. "Girls don't know what they do. That's what makes them girls. They're worse than snakes, worse than machines." He was mad, crazy-mad, in the outer deep of space. He stood up so suddenly that he shot through the air and had to catch himself on the ceiling.

A noise in the side of the cabin made them both turn for a moment. Trece was trying to break loose from his bonds. It did no good. Veesey flung herself toward Trece, but Talatashar caught her by the shoulder. He twisted her around. His eyes blazed at her out of his poor, misshapen face.

Veesey had sometimes wondered what death would be like. She thought:

This is it.

Her body still fought Talatashar, there in the spaceboat cabin. Trece groaned behind his shackles and his gag. She tried to scratch at Talatashar's eyes, but the thought of death made her seem far away. Far away, inside herself.

Inside herself, where other people could not reach, ever—no matter what happened.

Out of that deep nearby remoteness, words came into her head:

Lady if a man
Tries to bother you, you can
Think blue,
Count two,
And look for a red shoe...

Thinking blue was not hard. She just imagined the yellow cabin lights turning blue. Counting "one-two" was the simplest thing in the world. And even with Talatashar straining to catch her free hand, she managed to remember the beautiful, beautiful red shoes which she had seen in *Marcia and the Moon Men*.

The lights dimmed momentarily and a huge voice roared at them from the control board.

"Emergency, top emergency! People! People out of repair!"

Talatashar was so astonished that he let her go.

The board whined at them like a siren. It sounded as though the computer had become flooded with weeping.

In an utterly different voice from his impassioned talkative rage, Talatashar looked directly at her and asked, very soberly, "Your cube. Didn't I get your cube too?"

There was a knocking on the wall. A knocking from the millions of miles of emptiness outside. A knocking out of nowhere.

A person they had never seen before stepped into the ship, walking through the double wall as though it had been nothing more than a streamer of mist.

It was a man. A middle-aged man, sharp of face, strong in torso and limbs, clad in very old-style clothes. In his belt he had a whole collection of weapons, and in his hand a whip.

"You there," said the stranger to Talatashar, "untie that man."

He gestured with the whip-butt toward Trece, still bound and gagged.

Talatashar got over his surprise.

"You're a cube-ghost. You're not real!"

The whip hissed in the air and a long red welt appeared on Talatashar's wrist. The drops of blood began to float beside him in the air before he could speak again.

Veesey could say nothing; her mind and body seemed to be blanking out.

As she sank to the floor, she saw Talatashar shake himself, walk over to Trece and begin untying the knots.

When Talatashar got the gag out of Trece's mouth, Trece spoke—not to him, but to the stranger:

"Who are you?"

"I do not exist," said the stranger, "but I can kill you, any of you, if I wish. You had better do as I say. Listen carefully. You too," he added, turning half-way around and looking at Veeseey, "you listen too, because it's you who called me."

All three listened. The fight was gone out of them. Trece rubbed his wrists and shook his hands to get the circulation going in them again.

The stranger turned, in courtly and elegant fashion, so that he spoke most directly to Talatashar.

"I derive from the young lady's cube. Did you notice the lights dim? Tiga-belas left a false cube in her freezebox but he hid me in the ship. When she thought the key notions at me, there was a fraction of a microvolt which called for more power at my terminals. I am made from the brain of some small animal, but I bear the personality and the strength of Tiga-belas. I shall last a billion years. When the current came on full power, I became operative as a distortion in your minds. I do not exist," said he, specifically addressing himself to Talatashar, "but if I needed to take out my imaginary pistol and to shoot you in the head with it, my control is so strong that your bone would comply with my command. The hole would appear in your head and your blood and your brains would pour out, just as much as blood is pouring from your hand just now. Look at your hand and believe me, if you wish."

Talatashar refused to look.

The stranger went on in a very deliberate tone. "No bullet would come from my pistol, no ray, no blast, nothing. Nothing at all. But your flesh would believe me, even if your thoughts did not. Your bone structure would believe me, whether you thought so or not. I am communicating to every separate single cell in your body, to everything which I feel to be alive. If I think *bullet* at you, your bone will pull aside for the imaginary wound. Your skin will part, your blood will pour out, your brains will splash. They will not do it by physical force but by communication from me. Communication direct, you fool. That may not be real violence, but it serves my purpose just as well. Now do you understand me? Look at your wrist."

Talatashar did not avert his eyes from the stranger. In an odd cold voice he said, "I believe you. I guess I am crazy. Are you going to kill me?"

"I don't know," said the stranger.

Trece said, "Please, are you a person or a machine?"

"I don't know," said the stranger to him too.

"What's your name?" asked Veeseey. "Did you get a name when they made you and sent you with us?"

"My name," said the stranger, with a bow to her, "is Sh'san."

"Glad to meet you, Sh'san," said Trece, holding out his own hand.

They shook hands.

"I felt your hand," said Trece. He looked at the other two in amazement. "I felt his hand, I really did. What were you doing out in space all this time?"

The stranger smiled, "I have work to do, not talk to make."

"What do you want us to do," said Talatashar, "now that you've taken over?"

"I haven't taken over," said Sh'san, "and you will do what you have to do. Isn't that the nature of people?"

"But, please—" said Veeseey.

The stranger had vanished and the three of them were alone in the spaceboat cabin again. Trece's gag and bindings had finally drifted down to the carpet but Tala's blood hung gently in the air beside him.

Very heavily, Talatashar spoke, "Well, we're through that. Would you say I was crazy?"

"Crazy?" said Veeseey. "I don't know the word."

"Damaged in the thinking," explained Trece to her. Turning to Talatashar he began to speak seriously, "I think that—" He was interrupted by the control board. Little bells rang and a sign lighted up. They all saw it. *Visitors expected*, said the glowing sign.

The storage door opened and a beautiful woman came into the cabin with them. She looked at them as though she knew them all. Veeseey and Trece were inquisitive and startled, but Talatashar turned white, dead white.

V

Veesey saw that the woman wore a dress of the style which had vanished a generation ago—a style now seen only in the story-boxes. There was no back to it. The lady had a bold cosmetic design fanning out from her spinal column. In front, the dress hung from the usual magnet tabs which had been inserted into the shallow fatty area of the chest, but in her case the tabs were above the clavicles, so that the dress rose high, with an air of old-fashioned prudishness. Magnet tabs were at the usual place just below the rib-cage, holding the half-skirt, which was very full, in a wide sweep of unpressed pleats. The lady wore a necklace and matching bracelet of off-world coral. The lady did not even look at Veesey. She went straight to Talatashar and spoke to him with peremptory love:

"Tal, be a good boy. You've been bad."

"Mama," gasped Talatashar. "Mama, you're dead!"

"Don't argue with me," she snapped. "Be a good boy. Take care of the little girl. Where is the little girl?" She looked around and saw Veesey. "That little girl," she added, "be a good boy to *that* little girl. If you don't, you will break your mother's heart, you will ruin your mother's life, you will break your mother's heart, just like your father did. Don't make me tell you twice."

She leaned over and kissed him on the forehead, and it seemed to Veesey that both sides of the man's face were equally twisted, for that moment.

She stood up, looked around, nodded politely at Trece and Veesey, and walked back into the storage room, closing the door after her.

Talatashar plunged after her, opening the door with a bang and shutting it with a slam. Trece called after him:

"Don't stay in there too long. You'll freeze."

Trece added, speaking to Veesey, "This is something your cube is doing. That Sh'san, he's the most powerful warden I ever saw. Your psychological guard must have been a genius. And you know what's the matter with him?" He nodded at the closed door. "He told me once, just in general. His own mother raised him. He was born in the asteroid belt and she didn't turn him in."

"You mean, his very own mother?" said Veesey.

"Yes, his genealogical mother," said Trece.

"How *dirty*!" said Veesey. "I never heard of anything like it."

Talatashar came back into the room and said nothing to either of them.

The mother did not reappear.

But Sh'san, the eidetic man imprinted in the cube, continued to assert his authority over all three of them.

Three days later Marcia herself appeared, talked to Veesey for half an hour about her adventures with the Moon Men, and then disappeared again. Marcia never pretended that she was real. She was too pretty to be real. A thick cascade of yellow hair crowned a well-formed head; dark eyebrows arched over vivid brown eyes, and an enchantingly mischievous smile pleased Veesey, Trece, and Talatashar. Marcia admitted that she was the imaginary heroine of a dramatic series from the story-boxes. Talatashar had calmed down completely after the apparition of Sh'san followed by that of his mother. He seemed anxious to get to the bottom of the phenomena. He tried to do it by asking Marcia.

She answered his questions willingly.

"What are you?" he demanded. The friendly smile on the good side of his face was more frightening than a scowl would have been.

"I'm a little girl, silly," said Marcia.

"But you're not real," he insisted.

"No," she admitted, "but are you?" She laughed a happy girlish laugh—the teen-ager tying up the bewildered adult in his own paradox.

"Look," he persisted, "you know what I mean. You're just something that Veesey saw in the story-boxes and you've come to give her imaginary red shoes."

"You can feel the shoes after I've left," said Marcia.

"That means the cube has made them out of something on this ship," said Talatashar, very triumphantly.

"Why not?" said Marcia. "I don't know about ships. I guess he does."

"But even if the shoes are real, you're not," said Talatashar. "Where do you go when you 'leave' us?"

"I don't know," said Marcia. "I came here to visit Veesey. When I go away I suppose that I will be where I was before I came."

"And where was that?"

"Nowhere," said Marcia, looking solid and real.

"Nowhere? So you admit you're nothing?"

"I will if you want me to," said Marcia, "but this conversation doesn't make much sense to me. Where were you before you were here?"

"Here? You mean in this boat? I was on earth," said Talatashar.

"Before you were in this universe, where were you?"

"I wasn't born, so I didn't exist."

"Well," said Marcia, "it's the same with me, only a little bit different. Before I existed I didn't exist. When I exist, I'm here. I'm an echo out of Veesey's personality and I'm helping her to remember that she is a pretty young girl. I feel as real as you feel. So there!"

Marcia went back to talking about her adventures with the Moon Men and Veesey was fascinated to hear all the things they had had to leave out of the story-box version. When Marcia was through, she shook hands with the two men, gave Veesey a little peck of a kiss on her left cheek and walked through the hull into the gnawing emptiness of space, marked only by the starless rhomboids of the sails which cut off part of the heavens from view.

Talatashar pounded his fist in his other, open hand. "Science has gone too far. They will kill us with their precautions."

Trece said, deadly calm: "And what might you have done?"

Talatashar fell into a gloomy silence.

And on the tenth day after the apparitions began, they ended. The power of the cube drew itself into a whole thunderbolt of decision. Apparently the cube and the ship's computers had somehow filled in each other's data.

The person who came in this time was a space captain, gray, wrinkled, erect, tanned by the radiation of a thousand worlds.

"You know who I am," he said.

"Yes, sir, a captain," said Veesey.

"I don't know you," said Talatashar, "and I'm not sure I believe in you."

"Has your hand healed?" asked the captain, grimly.

Talatashar fell silent.

The captain called them to attention. "Listen. You are not going to live long enough to get to the stars on your present course. I want Trece to set the macro-chronography for intervals of ninety-five years, and then I want to watch while he gives two of you at a time five years on watch. That will do to set the sails, check the tangling of the pod lines, and send out report beacons. This ship should have a sailor, but there is not enough equipment to turn one of you into a sailor, so we'll have to take a chance on the robot controls while all three of you sleep in your freezebeds. Your sailor died of a blood clot and the robots pushed him out of the cabin before they woke you—"

Trece winced. "I thought he had committed suicide."

"Not a bit," said the captain. "Now listen. You'll get through in about three sleeps if you obey orders. If you don't, you'll never get there."

"It doesn't matter about me," said Talatashar, "but this little girl has got to get to Wereld Schemering while she still has some life. One of your blasted apparitions told me to take care of her, but the idea is a good one, anyhow."

"Me too," said Trece. "I didn't realize that she was just a kid until I saw her talking to that other kid Marcia. Maybe I'll have a daughter like her some day."

The captain said nothing to these comments but gave them the full, happy smile of an old, wise man.

An hour later they were through with the check-up of the boat. The three were ready to go to their separate freezebeds. The captain was getting ready to make his farewell.

Talatashar spoke up, "Sir, I can't help asking it, but who are you?"

"A captain," said the captain promptly.

"You know what I mean," said Tala wearily.

The captain seemed to be looking inside himself. "I am a temporary, artificial personality created out of your minds by the personality which you call Sh'san. Sh'san is on the ship, but hidden from you, so that you will do him no harm. Sh'san was imprinted with the personality of a man, a real man, by the name of Tiga-belas. Sh'san was also imprinted with the personalities of five or six good space officers, just in case those skills might be needed. A small amount of static electricity keeps Sh'san on the alert, and when he is in the right position, he has a triggering mechanism which can call for more current from the ship's supply."

"But what *is* he? What *are* you?" Talatashar kept on, almost pleading. "I was about to commit a terrible crime and you ghosts came in and saved me. Are you imaginary? Are you real?"

"That's philosophy. I'm made by science. I wouldn't know," said the captain.

"Please," said Veeseey, "could you tell us what it seems like to you? Not what it is. What it seems like."

The captain sagged, as though the discipline had gone out of him—as though he suddenly felt terribly old. "When I'm talking and doing things, I suppose that I feel about like any other space captain. If I stop to think about it, I find myself pretty upsetting. I know that I'm just an echo in your minds, combined with the experience and wisdom which has gone into the cube. So I guess that I do what real people do. I just don't think about it very much. I mind my business." He stiffened and straightened and was himself again. "My own business," he repeated.

"And Sh'san," said Trece, "how do you feel about him?"

A look of awe—almost a look of terror—came upon the captain's face. "He? Oh, him." The tone of wonder enriched his voice and made it echo in the small cabin of the spaceboat: "Sh'san. He is the thinker of all thinking, the 'to be' of being, the doer of doings. He is powerful beyond your strongest imagination. He makes me come living out of your living minds. In fact," said the captain with a final snarl, "he is a dead mouse-brain laminated with plastic and I have no idea at all of who *I* am. Good night to you all!"

The captain set his cap on his head and walked straight through the hull. Veeseey ran to a viewport but there was nothing outside the ship. Nothing. Certainly no captain.

"What can we do," said Talatashar, "but obey?"

They obeyed. They climbed into their freezebeds. Talatashar attached the correct electrodes to Veeseey and to Trece before he went to his bed and attached his own. They called to each other pleasantly as the lids came down.

They slept.

VI

At destination, the people of Wereld Schemering did the ingathering of pods, sails and ship themselves. They did not wake the sleepers till they had them all assured of safety on the ground.

They woke the three cabin mates together. Veeseey, Trece, and Talatashar were so busy answering questions about the dead sailor, about the repaired sails and about their problems on the trip that they did not have time to talk to each other. Veeseey saw that Talatashar seemed to be very handsome. The port doctors had done something to restore his face, so that he seemed a strangely dignified young-old man. At last Trece had a chance to talk to her.

"Good-by, kid," he said. "Go to school for a while here and then find yourself a good man. I'm sorry."

"Sorry for what?" she said, a terrible fear rising within her.

"For smooching around with you before that trouble came. You're just a kid. But you're a good kid." He ran his fingers through her hair,

turned on his heel and was gone.

She stood, utterly forlorn, in the middle of the room. She wished that she could weep. What use had she been on the trip?

Talatashar had come up to her unnoticed.

He held out his hand. She took it.

"Give it time, child," said he.

Is it *child* again? she thought to herself. To him she said, politely, "Maybe we'll see each other again. This is a pretty small world."

His face lit up in an oddly agreeable smile. It made such a wonderful difference for the paralysis to be gone from one side. He did not look old at all, not really old.

His voice took on urgency. "Veesey, remember that I remember. I remember what almost happened. I remember what we thought we saw. Maybe we did see all those things. We won't see them on the ground. But I want you to remember this. You saved us all. Me too. And Trece, and the thirty thousand out behind."

"Me?" she said. "What did I do?"

"You tuned in help. You let Sh'san work. It all came through you. If you hadn't been honest and kind and friendly, if you hadn't been terribly intelligent, no cube could have worked. That wasn't any dead mouse working miracles on us. It was your mind and your own goodness that saved us. The cube just added the sound effects. I tell you, if you hadn't been along, two dead men would be sailing off into the Big Nothing with thirty thousand spoiling bodies trailing along behind. You saved us all. You may not know how you did it, but you did."

An official tapped him on the arm; Tala said, firmly but politely, to him: "Just a moment.

"That's it, I guess," he said to her.

A contrary spirit seized her; she had to speak, though she risked unhappiness by talking. "And what you said about girls ... then ... that time?"

"I remember it." His face twisted almost back to its old ugliness for a moment. "I remember it. But I was wrong. Wrong."

She looked at him and she thought in her own mind about the *blue* sky, about the *two* doors behind them, and about the *red shoes* in her luggage. Nothing miraculous happened. No Sh'san, no voices, no magic cubes.

Except that he turned around, came back to her and said, "Look. Let's make sure that we see each other next week. These people at the desk can tell us where we are going to be, so that we'll find each other. Let's pester them."

Together they went to the immigration desk.

[End of *Think Blue, Count Two*, by Cordwainer Smith]