"I did," hissed another behind her.

"Then you are a liar and a blind one at that. Just you look there," she motioned to the stage where Agustin was magestically disappearing into the wings.

III

It was a strange Jesus that the villagers were seeing. On the cross was not a man such as popular piety pictures the Saviour. Agustin was a huge man. His outstretched arms seemed almost as thick as the arms of the cross, his legs, like two doric pillars, stood hard against the wood. His chest heaved at each breath. He was a man to admire and to fear. Up there on the cross his whole body breathed forth the herculean strength that was in him.

"My God, my God, Why Hast Thou forsaken Me?"

His voice thundered through the night like the bellowing of a wounded bull.

Agustin bowed his head. He closed his eyes and then, suddenly, he snapped to agonized attention.

"Father, into Thy hands I commend my Spirit!"

A peal of thunder crashed and re-echoed through the valley and hills filling the air with a rolling torrent of sound. A flash of lightning seared the night, ripping the darkness.

It was all over now. The curtain hid from view this new Christ upon the cross. A woman wept softly in a dark corner.

—RICHARD PATTEE, 60

THE STRANGER

"That's strange", rumbled Dr. Strombast, the Sultan's late. Oh yass, he's bringing some young fellow that impressed him . . . Oh well". With this, our very distinguished physicist dismissed Dr. Ali Makeesh, the leading mathematician of our time—and of course our visitor. I must admit though, that I was curious; Makeesh was kindness personified, but he did not impress easily.

We were waiting in the main room of the Roger Bacon Club, just off the grounds of the Institute. There was Strombast, enthroned in his easy chair; beside him sat Prof. Clark, a great man, both in and out of biology. Across the fireplace from Clark sat Jenkins, small and intense. He had no formal scientific training, but he knew more about the inner structure and activity of atoms than anyone. There were two other scientists, Clement, the volatile French psychologist, and another man whom I later learned is an astronomer. I am a journalist, but I studied for a Masters at the feet of Dr. Makeesh, and we kept up the connection.

We had been seated around the room like this for about an hour, talking—smoking, and kibitzing a chess game between Jenkins and Clement, when Dr. Makeesh came in with a tall, dark, young man carrying a small bag.

"Ah! Good evening gentlemen. I see our group is complete. Sorry to be late, but I have a visitor, Mr. ah . . . I'm so sorry . . . I . ."

"Kazah" supplied our guest.

"Oh yes, I do beg your pardon, like my friend Sen. Gust, I never forget a name or a face; unfortunetly, however I can rarely remember which goes with which." Makeesh then introduced each of us and he and Kazah took seats facing each other across the table.

We soon learned that Kazah was doing research as a space engineer "Kazah," I thought "I should know him if he's important." It's my business to know, but I could not place him. He could not be very big. "Strange that Dr. Makeesh should bring him. Kazah, must be another Pakistani. Makeesh doesn't see very many of his countrymen."

After a few polite remarks, Kazah was ignored. They were back to the old discussion about the possibility of other intelligent life in the universe.

"But I thought we'd settled that last night" said Clark. "After all, as the Sultan pointed out, the very number of stars would indicate with almost certain probality the existence of other planets suitable for advanced life."

"But intelligent life?" asked Jenkins doubtfully.

"Sure" replied Clark, "isn't that the ultimate development? All it requires is time."

"Then how do you account for Mars?" shot back Jenkins.

"But my dear fellow," broke in our astronomer, "we haven't explored Mars very much. At least not enough to know whether there **was** intelligent life there or not. Perhaps there was, or quite possibly its water and oxygen were too scarce to give its plant life a chance to evolve. That's Clark's province, not mine."

"This conjecture is all very fine," spoke up Strombast in his patronizing rumble, "but let us face facts. For twenty years now, ever since the Americans and the Russians have taken over the other duties with their big radio telescopes, Jodrell Bank has been trying to pick up intelligible signals from space. They haven't received anything that could possibly be a signal. If you ask me they never will."

"Well, I don't know if that's of too much significance. Even without the great distances, the interference from the stars would be terrific — all those stressed atoms and so on."

"That's true enough," admitted Strombast sulkily, "But, even so, we'll have to get out there and find them before we'll know if they exist. You can't make statements on conjecture."

"There's the rub," someone remarked "It would take so damn long to get there that no crew could live the length of a voyage out of our solar system."

"Why can't we get something faster than our atomic engines? I'd love to try the psychology of something besides people."

We got a laugh out of that, especially our visitor.

"Then stop wishing and do something" teased Clark. "You psychologists have been working long enough on E.S.P. and the like to develope teleportation. An instantaneous concentration of mind over matter . . . and PRESTO—you're there."

"It would be a slow trip if I depended on your mind" retorted Clement. "Seriously though, we do need a space drive that could move us as fast as light"

"Don't you know anything at all outside your own field?" sneered Strombast. "It's impossible to even approach the speed of light, Einstein proved that years ago."

"Did he really" snapped Clement, "I thought you discovered all the valid laws of time and space."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, please." interposed Makeesh "Let us hear Kazah on this. It's his field you know."

"The old fox!" I thought admiringly. "He's let us set the stage for him."

There was resigned, bored agreement.

"He was telling me that he has developed a system of almost instantaneous travel."

"He what?" exclaimed Strombast, loosing his ponderous dignity for an instant.

Jenkin's eyebrows almost disappeared into his hairline. All eyes turned to our visitor, some angerily, some apologetically, and all, I believe, with a certain sense of relief. There was something about this young man that caused us to be gnawed by a subconscious curiosity.

"Gentlemen, " he began. "What I propose is an entirely new means of travel. Yet mathematicians, indeed probably all of you have known its principle for a long time. When we travel through space, we travel, not only from point to point, but also from one time to another. Mathematically we could get around this by moving into a five dimentional world, or dispensing with time altogether. We have had no experience with five dimentions, but

we have with three. A body with absolutely no heat is immutable with respect to time, so would be the space enclosing it. Now space is very near absolute zero; very well, powerful condensers such as the new Vernenhause operating a ship designed like a hugh heat repeller—analogous to a thermocouple, will not only freeze a moving ship, but also the space around it. In short, one could blast a timeless path through space. Since neither the ship nor its course would be subject to time, it would move from point to point in . . . no time.

"Of course, there are limits to this. A ship has to be in free space to start with, it must return to time in space, and achieve its final destination under conventional power. Then too, the crew has to be thawed out rather carefully."

As soon as he stopped, questions and remarks rose like a hurricane.

"Preposterous".

"No, No."

"But how . . . ? "

The stranger held up his hand. "Dr. Strombast?"

Strombast began spitting out words so fast that one would suppose that they were burning him. "It's impossible, Vernenhaus' condensers won't do what he claims, which is a lot less than you claim for yours. You haven't the power . . . . can't make a path that long."

"It needn't be much longer than the ship, for the path will move with it".

"Then you'll be moving this . . . this path of yours faster than the speed of light, which is impossible."

"It's impossible for matter to even approach the speed of light, but this path isn't mass, nor even energy, rather, it's an absence. The principles and machinery may seem impossible to you Doctor, but remember in science no one is infallible."

There was absolute silence in the room, Strombast had been told . . . he didn't look very good, even in his own eyes. But more important things were at stake and the group quickly recovered. For five minutes Kazah fielded questions like no man I had ever seen—he either had the greatest imagination since Jules Verne or he was right . . . . but he couldn't be. As he talked one thing did become apparent, he knew an awful lot. Only the Sultan and Clark were giving him any breaks, and the usually valuable Clement was strangely silent. Clark even went so far as to remark that recent experiments had indicated that a space crew could be frozen and successfully revived.

Kazah at last called a halt to proceedings. "You will never believe without proof, even then some of you will not. As you would say, you want blood. Very well."

He took up his briefcase and arrayed its contents on the table, it looked like a portable analysists kit with a few items from a doctor's bag thrown in.

He picked up a large empty syringe, we gaped at him.

"You could do a qualative analysis with this equipment, right? Suddenly he plunged the syringe into his arm. We feared for his sanity and rose to restrain him, but he dropped the syringe on the table and fled. We rushed to the door but he had disappeared.

On resuming their places, Jenkins reproached Makeesh for bringing a demented compatriot.

"But he is not Pakastani" said the Sultan.

"But what the Devil is he?" I wondered.

"Let's analyse his blood," said Clark "that seemed to be what he wanted."

"You must be as crazy as he." said some one.

M. Clement jumped to his feet, waving his hands frantically for silence. "I don't think that man was crazy, I tell you he was saner than any of us—me anyway" he added as he subsided back to normal.

Clark and Jenkins came in from the next room. Clark seemed, as he would say, "nonplussed", while Jenkins usually skeptical expression had changed to one that could best be called dazed.

"I did the analysis" began Clark. "There was iron, of course, but only a trace. I . . . the . . . the blood is based on magnesium."

"Sounds like clorophyll" I ventured.

"No, it's animal blood. When I first looked at it under a light and saw that it wasn't red, I put a sample under a microscope . . . our friend had one in the bag. It's blood alright . . . but it . . . it's . . . it's like nothing on this earth . . ."

We sat there stunned by what he had said, and what was unsaid in our minds. **Nothing on earth.**

—J. M. REDDIN,