

BY THEODORE STURGEON



I SAT at the controls of the big D-8 bulldozer, and I tried to remember. The airfield shoulder, built on a saltflat, stretched around me. Off to the west was a clump of buildings—the gas station and grease rack. Near it was the skeletal silhouette of a temporary weather observation post with its spinning velocimeter and vane and windsock. Everything seemed normal, but there was something *else*...

I could remember people, beautiful people in shining, floating garments. I remembered them as if I had seen them just a minute ago, and yet at a distance; but the memories were of faces close—close. One face—a golden girl; eyes and skin and hair three different shades of gold.

I shook my head so violently that it hurt. I was a bulldozer operator. I was—what was I supposed to be doing? I looked around me, saw the gravel spread behind me, the bare earth ahead; knew, then, that I was spreading gravel with the machine. But I seemed to—to— Look, without the physical fact of the half-done job around me, I

Heading by Lee Brown Coye

He wanted to go back to a place he'd surely never visited!

wouldn't have known why I was there at all!

I knew where I had seen that girl, those people. I thought I knew... but the thought was just where I couldn't reach it. My mind put out searching tendrils for that knowledge of place, that was so certainly there, and the knowledge receded so that the tendrils stretched out thin and cracked with the effort, and my head ached from it.

A big trailer-type bottom-dump truck came hurtling and howling over the shoulder toward me, the huge fenderless driving wheels throwing clots of mud high in the air. The driver was a Puerto-Rican, a hefty middle-aged fellow. I knew him well. Well—didn't I? He threw out one arm, palm up, signaling "Where do you want it?" I pointed vaguely to the right, to the advancing edge of the spread gravel. He spun his steering wheel with one hand, put the other on the trip-lever on his steering column, keeping his eyes on my face. As he struck the edge of the gravel fill with his wheels I dropped my hand; he punched the lever and the bottom of the trailer opened up, streaming gravel out in a windrow thirty feet long and a foot deep—twelve cubic yards of it, delivered at full speed. The driver waved and headed off, the straight-gut exhaust of his high-speed Diesel snorting and snarling as the rough ground bounced the man's foot on the accelerator.

I waved back at the Puerto-Rican—what was his name? I knew him, didn't I? He knew me, the way he waved as he left. His name—was it Paco? Cruz? Eulalio? Damn it, no, and I knew it as well as I knew my own—

But I didn't know my own name!

Oh hell, oh hell, I'm crazy. I'm scared. I'm scared crazy. What had happened to my head? . . . Everything whirled around me and without effort I remembered about the people in the shining clothes and as my mind closed on it, it evaporated again and there was nothing there.

ONCE when I was a kid in school I fell off the parallel bars and knocked myself out, and when I came to it was like this. I could see everything and feel and smell and taste anything, but I couldn't remember anything. Not for a minute. I

would ask what had happened, and they would tell me, and five minutes later I'd ask again. They asked me my address so they could take me home, and I couldn't remember it. They got the address from the school files and took me home, and my feet found the way in and up four flights of stairs to our apartment—I didn't remember which way to go but my feet did. I went in and tried to tell my mother what was the matter with me and I couldn't remember, and she put me to bed and I woke four hours later perfectly all right again.

In a minute, there on the bulldozer, I didn't get over being scared but I began to get used to it, so I could think a little. I tried to remember everything at first, but that was too hard, so I tried to find something I could remember. I sat there and let my mind go quite blank. Right away there was something about a bottom-dump truck and some gravel. It was there, clear enough, but I didn't know where it fit nor how far back. I looked around me and there was the windrow of gravel waiting to be spread. Then that was what the truck was for; and—had it just been there, or had I been sitting there for long, for ever so long, waiting to remember that I must spread it?

Then I saw that I could remember ideas, but not events. Events were there, yes, but not in order. No continuity. A year ago—a second ago—same thing. Nothing clear, nothing very real, all mixed up. Ideas were there whatever, and continuity didn't matter. That I could remember an idea, that I could know that a windrow of gravel meant that gravel must be spread; *that* was an idea, a condition of things which I could recognize. The truck's coming and going and dumping, that was an event. I knew it had happened because the gravel was there, but I didn't know when, or if anything had happened in between.

I looked at the controls and frowned. Could I remember what to do with them? This lever and that pedal—what did they mean to me? Nothing, and nothing again. . . .

I mustn't think about that. I don't have to think about that. I must think about *what* I must do and not how I must do it. I've got to spread the stone. Here there is spread stone and there there is none, and at the

edge of the spread stone is the windrow of gravel. So, watching it, seeing how it lay, I let my hands and feet remember about the levers and pedals. They throttled up, raised the blade off the ground, shifted into third gear, swung the three-ton moldboard and its twelve-foot cutting edge into the windrow. The blade loaded and gravel ran off the ends in two even rolls, and my right hand flicked to and away from me on the blade control, knowing how to raise it enough to let the gravel run out evenly underneath the cutting edge, not too high so that it would make a bobble in the fill for the tracks to teeter on when they reached it—for a bulldozer builds the road it walks on, and if the road is rough the machine see-saws forward and the blade cuts and fills to make waves which, when the tracks reach them, makes the machine see-saw and cut waves, which, when the tracks reach them . . . anyway, my hands knew what to do, and my feet; and they did it all the time when I could only see what was to be done, and could not understand the events of doing it.

This won't do, I thought desperately. I'm all right, I guess, because I can do my work. It's all laid out in front of me and I know what has to be done and my hands and feet know how to do it; but suppose somebody comes and speaks to me or tells me to go somewhere else, I who can't even remember my own name. My hands and my feet have more sense than my head.

SO I thought that I had to inventory everything I could trust, everything I knew positively. What were the things I knew?

The machine was there and true, and the gravel, and the bottom-dump that brought it. My being there was a real thing. You have to start everything with the belief that you yourself exist.

The job, the work, they were true things. Where was I?

I must be where I should be, where I belonged, for the bottom-dump driver knew me, knew I was there, knew I was waiting for stone to spread. The airfield was there, and the fact that it was unfinished. "Airfield" was like a corollary to me, with the runway and the windsock its supporting

axioms, and I had no need to think further. The people in the shining garments, and the girl—

But there was nothing about them here. Nothing at all.

To spread stone was a thing I had to do. But was that all? It wasn't just spreading stone. I had to spread it to—to—

Not to help finish the airfield. It wasn't that. It was something else, something—

Oh. Oh! I had to spread stone to get somewhere.

I didn't want to get anywhere, except maybe to a place where I could think again, where I could know what was happening to me, where I could reach out with my mind and grasp those important things, like my name, and the name of the bottom-dump driver; Paco, or Cruz, or Eulalio or maybe even Emanuelo von Hachmann de la Vega, or whatever. But being able to think straight again and know all these important things was arriving at a *state* of consciousness, not at a *place*. I knew, I knew, somehow I knew truly, that to arrive at that state I had to arrive at a point.

Suddenly, overwhelmingly, I had a flash of knowledge about the point—not what it was, but how it was, and I screamed and hurt my throat and fell blindly back in the seat of the tractor trying to push away *how* it was.

My abdomen kneaded itself with the horror of it. I put my hands on my face and my hands and face were wet with sweat and tears. Afraid? Have you ever been afraid to die, seeing Death looking right at you; closer than that; have you seen Death turn away from you because He knows you must follow Him? Have you seen that, and been afraid?

Well, this was worse. For this I'd hug Death to me, for He alone could spare me what would happen to me when I reached the place I was going to.

So I wouldn't spread stone.

I wouldn't do anything that would bring me closer to reaching the place where that thing would happen to me. *Had happened* to me. . . . I wouldn't do it. That was an important thing.

There was one other important thing. I must not go on like this, not knowing my name, and what the name of the bottom-

dump driver was, and where this airfield and this base were, and all those things.

These two things were the most important things in the world. In *this* world. . . . **THIS** world. . . .

This world, this world—*other* world. . . .

THERE was a desert all around-me.

Ha! So the airfield wasn't real, and the bottom-dump wasn't real, and the anemometer and the grease-racks weren't real. Ha! (why worry about the driver's name if he wasn't real?)

The bulldozer was real, though. I was sitting on it. The six big cylinders were ticking over, and the master-clutch lever was twitching rhythmically as if its lower end were buried in something that breathed. Otherwise—just desert, and some hills over there, and a sun which was too orange.

Think, now, think. This desert means something important. I wasn't surprised at being in the desert. That was important. This place in the desert was near something, near an awful something that would hurt me.

I looked all around me. I couldn't see it, but it was there, the something that would hurt so. I wouldn't go through that again—

Again.

Again—that was an important thing. I wouldn't spread stone and reach that place. I wouldn't go through that which had happened to me even if I stayed crazy like I was for the rest of eternity. Let them put me away and tie me up and shake their heads over me and walk away and leave me, and put bars on the window to slice the light of the crooked moon into black and silver bars on the floor of my cell. I didn't care about all that. I could face the ache of wanting to know about my name and the name of the driver of the bottom-dump (he was a Puerto-Rican so his name must be Villamil or Roberto, not Bucyrus-Erie or Caterpillar Thirteen Thousand) and the people in the shining clothes; I *was* facing all that, and I know how it hurt, but I would not go through that place again and be hurt so much more. Not again. Not again.

Again. Again again again. What is the again-ness of everything? Everything I am doing I am doing again. I could remember that feeling from before—years ago it used

to happen to-me every once in a while. You've never been to a certain village before, we'll say, and you come up over the crown of the hill on your bicycle and see the way the church is and the houses, and the turn of that crooked cobblestoned street, the shape and tone of the very flower-stems. You know that if you were asked, you could say how many pickets were in the white gate in the blue-and-white fence in the little house third from the corner. All the scientists nod and smile and say you did see it for the second time—a twentieth of a second after the first glimpse; and that the impact of familiarity was built up in the next twentieth of a second. And you nod and smile too and say well, whaddaye know. But you know, you *know* you've seen that place before, no matter what they say.

That's the way I knew it, sitting there on my machine in the desert and not surprised, and having that feeling of again-ness; because I was remembering the last time the bottom-dump came to me there on the airfield shoulder, trailing a plume of blue smoke from the exhaust stack, bouncing and barking as it hurtled toward me. It meant nothing at first, remembering, that it came, nor that it was the same driver, the Puerto-Rican; and of course he was carrying the same sized load of the same material. All trips of the bottom-dump were pretty much the same. But there was one thing I remembered—*now* I remembered—

THERE was a grade-stake driven into the fill, to guide the depth of the gravel, and *it was no nearer to me than it had ever been*. So that hadn't been the same bottom-dump, back another time. It was the *same time*, all over again! The last time was wiped out. I was on a kind of escalator and it carried me up until I reached the place where I realized about what I had to go through, and screamed. And then I was snatched back and put on the bottom again, at the place where the Puerto Rican driver *Senor What's-his-name* dumped the gravel and went away again.

And this desert, now. This desert was a sort of landing at the side of the escalator, where I might fall sometimes instead of going all the way to the bottom where the truck came. I had been here before, and I

was here again. I had been at the unfinished air base again and again. And there was the other place, with the shining people, and the girl with all those kinds of gold. That was the same place with the crooked moon.

I covered my eyes with my hands and tried to think. The clacking Diesel annoyed me, suddenly, and I got up and reached under the hood and pulled the compression release. Gases chattered out of the ports, and a bubble of silence formed around me, swelling, the last little sounds scampering away from me in all directions, leaving me quiet.

There was a soft thump in the sand beside the machine. It was one of the shining people, the old one, whose forehead was so broad and whose hair was fine, fine like a cobweb. I knew him. I knew his name, too, though I couldn't think of it at the moment.

He dismounted from his flying-chair and came to me.

"Hello," I said. I took my shirt from the seat beside me and hung it on my shoulder. "Come on up."

He smiled and put up his hand. I took it and helped him climb up over the cat. His hands were very strong. He stepped over me and sat down.

"How do you feel?" Sometimes he spoke aloud, and sometimes he didn't, but I always understood him.

"I feel—mixed up."

"Yes, of course," he said kindly. "Go on. Ask me about it."

I looked at him. "Do I—*always* ask you about it?"

"Every time."

"Oh." I looked all around, at the desert, at the hills, at the dozer, at the sun which was too orange. "Where am I?"

"On Earth," he said; only the word he used for Earth meant Earth only to him. It meant *his* earth.

"I know that," I said. "I mean, where am I really? Am I on that air base, or am I here?"

"Oh, you are here," he said.

SOMEHOW I was vastly relieved to hear it. "Maybe you'd better tell me all about it again."

"You said 'again'," he said, and put his hand on my arm. "You're beginning to

realize. . . . Good, lad. Good. All right. I'll tell you once more.

"You came here a long time ago. You followed a road with your big noisy machine, and came roaring down out of the desert to the city. The people had never seen a noisy machine before, and they clustered around the gate to see you come. They stood aside to let you pass, and wondered, and you swung the machine and crushed six of them against the gate-posts."

"I *did*?" I cried. Then I said, "I did. Oh, I did."

He smiled at me again. "Shh. Don't. It was a long time ago. Shall I go on?"

"We couldn't stop you. We have no weapons. We could do nothing in the face of that monster you were driving. You ranged up and down the streets, smashing the fronts of buildings, running people down, and laughing. We had to wait until you got off the machine, and then we overpowered you. You were totally mad. It was," he added thoughtfully, "a very interesting study."

"Why did I do it?" I whispered. "How could I do such things to—*you*?"

"You had been hurt. Dreadfully hurt. You had come here, arriving somewhere near this spot. You were crazed by what you had endured. Later, we followed the tracks of your machine back. We found where you had driven it aimlessly over the desert, and where, once, you had left the machine and lived in a cave, probably for weeks. You ate desert grasses and the eight-legged crabs. You killed everything you could, through some strange, warped revenge motivation.

"You were crazed with thirst and revenge, and you were very thin, and your face was covered with hair, of all extraordinary things, though analysis showed that you had a constant desire for a hairless face. After treatment you became almost rational. But your time-sense was almost totally destroyed. And you had two almost unbreakable psychological blocks—your memory of how you came here, and your sense of identity.

"We did what we could for you, but you were unhappy. The moons had an odd effect on you. We have two, one well inside the other in its orbit, but both with the same

period. Without instruments they appear to be an eclipse when they are full. The sight of what you called that crooked moon undid a lot of our work. And then you would get the attacks of an overwhelming emotion you term 'remorse,' which appeared to be something like cruelty and something like love and included a partial negation of the will to survive . . . and you could not understand why we would not punish you. Punish you—when you were sick!"

"Yes," I said. "I—remember most of it now. You gave me everything—I could want. You even gave me—gave me—"

"Oh—that. Yes. You had some deep-seated convictions about love, and marriage. We felt you would be happier—"

"I was, and then I wasn't. I—I wanted—"

"I know. I know," he said soothingly. "You wanted your name again, and somehow you wanted your own earth."

I CLENCHED my fists until my forearms hurt. "I should be satisfied," I cried. "I should be. You are all so kind, and she—and she—she's been—" I shook my head angrily. "I must be crazy."

"You generally ask me," he said smiling, "at this point, how you came here."

"I do?"

"You do. I'll repeat it. You see, there are irregularities in the fabric of space. No—not space, exactly. We have a word for it—" (he spoke it) "—which means, literally, 'space which is time which is psyche'. It is a condition of space which by its nature creates time and thought and matter. Your world, relative to ours, is in the infinitely great, or in the infinitely small, or perhaps in the infinitely distant, either in space or in time—it does not matter, for they are all the same thing in their ultimate extensions: . . . but to go on:

"While you were at your work, you ran your machine into a point of tension in this fabric—a freak, completely improbable position in—" (he spoke the word again) "—in which your universe and ours were tangential. You—went through."

I tensed as he said it.

"Yes, that was the thing. It caused you inconceivable agony. It drove you mad. It filled you full of vengeance and fear. Well, we—cured you of everything but the single

fear of going through that agony again, and the peculiar melancholy involving the loss of your ego—your desire to know your own name. Since we failed there—" he shrugged "—we have been doing the only thing left to us. We are trying to send you back."

"Why? Why bother?"

"You are not content here. Our whole social system, our entire philosophy, is based on the contentment of the individual. So we must do what we can . . . in addition, you have given us a tremendous amount of research material in psychology and in theoretical cosmogony. We are grateful. We want you to have what you want. Your fear is great. Your desire is greater. And to help you achieve your desire, we have put you on this course of abreaction."

"Abreaction?"

He nodded. "The psychological re-enactment, or retracing, of everything you have done since you came here, in an effort to return you to the entrance-point in exactly the same frame of mind as that in which you came through it. We cannot find that point. It has something to do with your particular psychic matrix. But if the point is still here, and if, by hypnosis, we can cause you to do exactly what you did when you first came through—why, then, you'll go back."

"Will it be—dangerous?"

"Yes," he said, unhesitatingly. "Even if the point of tangency is still here, where you emerged, it may not be at the same point on your earth. Don't forget—you have been here for eleven of your years. . . . And then there's the agony—bad enough if you do go through, infinitely worse if you do not, for you may drift in— in *somewhere* forever, quite conscious, and with no possibility of release."

You know all this, and yet you still want us to try. . . . He sighed. "We admire you deeply, and wonder too; for you are the bravest man we have ever known. We wonder most particularly at your culture, which can produce such an incredible regard for the ego. . . . Shall we try again?"

I LOOKED at the sun which was too orange, and at the hills, and at his broad, quiet, beautiful face. If I could have spoken my name then, I think I should have stayed. If I could have seen *her* just at that

moment, I think I should have waited a little longer, at least.

"Yes," I said. "Let's try it again."

I was so afraid that I couldn't remember my name or the name of Gracias de Nada, or something, the fellow who drove the bottom-dump. I couldn't remember how to run the machine; but my hands remembered, and my feet.

Now I sat and looked at the windrow; and then I pulled back the throttle and raised the blade. I swung into the windrow, and the gravel loaded clean onto the blade and cleanly ran off in two even rolls at the sides. When I sensed that the gravel was all off the blade, I stopped, shifted into high reverse, pulled the left steering clutch to me, let in the master clutch, stamped the left brake. . . .

That was the thing, then. Back-blading that roll out—the long small windrow of gravel that had run off the ends of my blade. As I backed over it, the machine straddling it, I dropped the blade on it and floated it; so that it smoothed out the roll. Then it was that I looked back—force of habit, for a bulldozer that size can do real damage backing into powerpoles or buildings—and I saw the muzzy bit of fill.

It was a patch of spread gravel that seemed whirling, blurred at the edges. Look into the sun and then suddenly at the floor. There will be a muzzy patch there, whirling and swirling like that. I thought something funny had happened to my eyes. But I didn't stop the machine, and then suddenly I was in it.

Again.

It built up slowly, the agony. It built up in a way that promised more and then carefully fulfilled the promise, and made of the peak of pain a further promise. There was no sense of strain, for everything was poised and counterbalanced and nothing would break. All of the inner force was as strong as all the outer forces, and all of me was the point of equilibrium.

Don't try to think about it. Don't try to imagine for a second. A second of that, unbalanced, would crush you to cosmic dust. There were years of it for me; years and years. . . . I was in an unused stockpile of years, somewhere in a hyperspace, and the

weight of them all was on me and in me, consecutively, concurrently.

I WOKE up very slowly. I hurt all over, and that was an excruciating pleasure, because the pain was only physical.

I began to forget right away.

A company doctor came in and peeped at me. I said, "Hi."

"Well, well," he said, beaming. "So the flying catskinner is with us again."

"What flying catskinner? What happened? Where am I?"

"You're in the dispensary. You, my boy, were working your bulldozer out on the fill and all of a sudden took it into your head to be a flying kay-det at the same time. That's what they say, anyhow. I do know that there wasn't a mark around the machine where it lay—not for sixty feet. You sure didn't drive it over there."

"What are you talking about?"

"That, son, I wouldn't know. But I went and looked myself. There lay the Cat, all broken up, and you beside it with your lungs all full of your own ribs. Deadest looking man I ever saw get better."

"I don't get it. Did anybody see this happen? Are you trying to—"

"Only one claims to have seen it was a Puerto-Rican bottom-dump driver. Doesn't speak any English, but he swears on every saint in the calendar that he looked back after dumping a load and saw you and twenty tons of bulldozer *forty feet in the air*, and then it was coming down!"

I stared. "Who was the man?"

"Heavy-set fellow. About forty-five. Strong as a rhino and seemed sane."

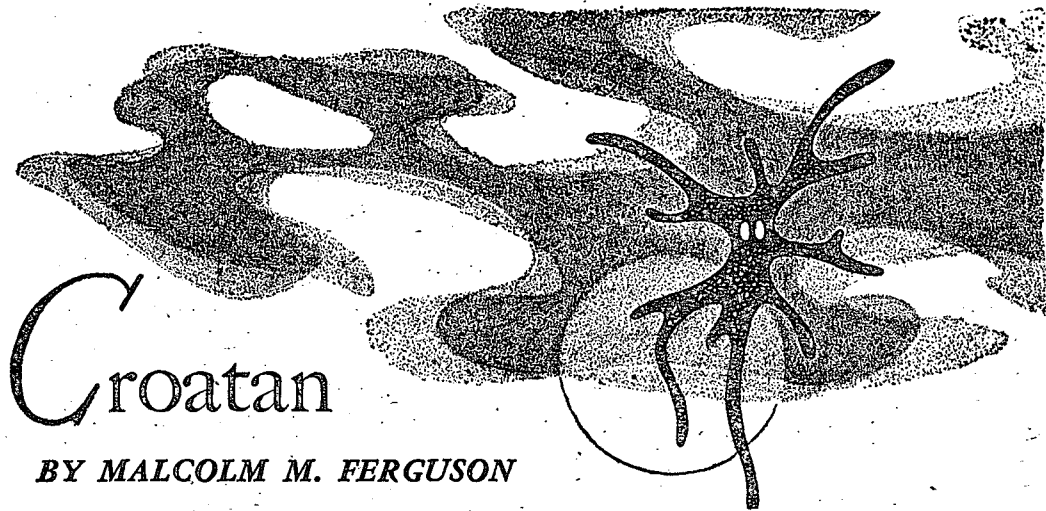
"I know him," I said. "A good man." Suddenly, then, happily: "Doc—you know what his name is?"

"No. Didn't ask. Some flowery Spanish moniker, I guess."

"No, it isn't," I said. "His name is Kirkpatrick. Alonzo Padin de Kirkpatrick."

He laughed. "The Irish are a wonderful people. Go to sleep. You've been unconscious for nearly three weeks."

"I've been unconscious for eleven years," I said, and felt foolish as hell because I hadn't meant to say anything like that and couldn't imagine what put it into my head.



Groatan

BY MALCOLM M. FERGUSON

I AM being held in the case of the mysterious disappearance of my friend, John Saunders, whom I visited at the hospital of St. Anthony, outside Roanoke, Virginia. I will not be held long, because I am responsible neither for his disappearance from an escape-proof upper-storey room, nor, for that matter, for the equally strange cause of his admission to that hospital room. For there are two mysteries, one inside the other.

To begin with, it was a mystery why John Saunders lay sick. And that sick, he, for the moment clairvoyant, should speak of matters he knew not, and hint gravely in a voice not his own, of mysteries beyond his ken.

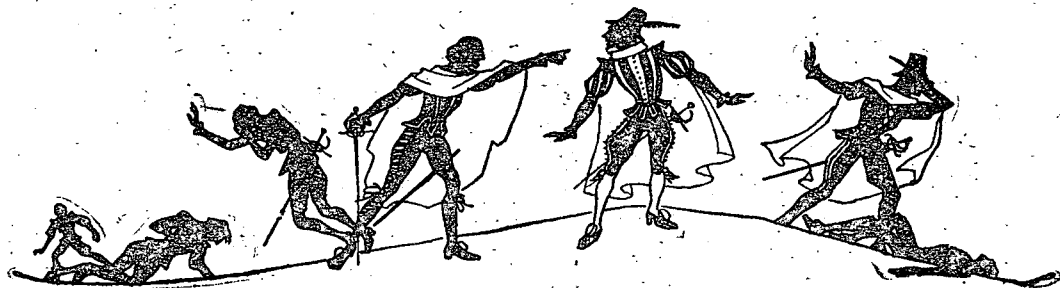
I knew him well, having often visited his house and the nearby workshop from which emerged the painted tiles, the potteryware, and more recently, the glassware which made his reputation. I had watched these creations grow under the young man's deft hands; I had argued with him about the

folk-aspects of this work, or rather, examined his knowledge upon the subject, being frequently surprised by the depth of interest and knowledge of the tall, blond, boyish-looking young man.

It was, in fact, only two days after I had left his house that I read the strange item in a Washington newspaper. There had been a fall of brown snow near Roanoke, a fall localized to a radius of about four miles. Brown snow. That was certainly odd, I thought, determining to call John up on the phone. No doubt he would go to the scene to study it—surely he could identify the alien substance if anyone could.

He answered the phone on his workshop extension. "Yes; I have some of the stuff under the microscope now," he replied to my query. "And it is like nothing else on earth that I know of. The particles are apparently crystalline, though they change shape rapidly, their movements making them seem alive, or imbued with a lifelike

*Creatures summoned from outer eons, our masters by an eternity
of time and progress*



Heading by Boris Dolgov