



SF

MASTERWORKS

KAREL ČAPEK

RUR &
War with
the Newts

'A great writer of the past who
speaks to the present in a voice
brilliant, clear, honourable,
blackly funny, and prophetic'

KURT VONNEGUT



**R.U.R. (Rossum's
Universal Robots)**

and

The War with the Newts

Karel Čapek

Science Fiction Masterworks Volume 93

eGod

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R.U.R.

(Rossum's Universal Robots)

Place: An Island.

Time: The Future.

Characters

HARRY DOMIN—*General Manager of Rossum's Universal Robots.*

SULLA—*A Robotess.*

MARIUS—*A Robot.*

HELENA **Glory.**

DR. GALL —*Head of the Physiological and Experimental Department of R. U. R.*

MR. FABRY—*Engineer General, Technical Controller of R. U. R.*

DR. HALLEMEIER—*Head of the Institute for Psychological Training of Robots.*

MR. ALQUIST—*Architect, Head of the Works Department of R. U. R. consul
busman—General Business Manager of R. U. R.*

NANA.

RADIUS— *A Robot.*

HELENA—*A Robotess.*

PRIMUS—*A Robot.*

A Servant.

First Robot.

Second Robot.

Third Robot.

Act I

[Central office of the factory of Rossum's Universal Robots. Entrance on the right. The windows on the front wall look out on the rows of factory chimneys. On the left more managing departments.]

DOMIN *is sitting in the revolving chair at a large American writing table. On the left-hand wall large maps showing steamship and railroad routes. On the right-hand wall are fastened printed placards. ("Robot's Cheapest Labor," etc.) In contrast to these wall fittings, the floor is covered with a splendid Turkish carpet, a sofa, leather armchair, and filing cabinets. At a desk near the windows SULLA is typing letters.]*

DOMIN *[Dictating]* Ready?

SULLA Yes.

DOMIN To E. M. McVicker and Co., Southampton, England. "We undertake no guarantee for goods damaged in transit. As soon as the consignment was taken on board we drew your captain's attention to the fact that the vessel was unsuitable for the transport of Robots, and we are therefore not responsible for spoiled freight. We beg to remain for Rossum's Universal Robots. Yours truly." *[SULLA, who has sat motionless during dictation, now types rapidly for a few seconds, then stops, withdrawing the completed letter.]* Ready?

SULLA Yes.

DOMIN Another letter. To the E. B. Huyson Agency, New York, U.S.A. "We beg to acknowledge receipt of order for five thousand Robots. As you are sending your own vessel, please dispatch as cargo equal quantities of soft and hard coal for R.U.R., the same to be credited as part payment of the amount due to us. We beg to remain, for Rossum's Universal Robots. Yours truly." *[SULLA repeats the rapid typing.]* Ready?

SULLA Yes.

DOMIN Another letter. "Friedrichswerks, Hamburg, Germany. We beg to

acknowledge receipt of order for fifteen thousand Robots.” *[Telephone rings.]*
Hello! This is the Central Office. Yes. Certainly. Well, send them a wire. Good.
[Hangs up telephone.]

Where did I leave off?

SULLA “We beg to acknowledge receipt of order for fifteen thousand Robots.”

DOMIN Fifteen thousand R. Fifteen thousand R.

[Enter MARIUS.]

DOMIN—Well, what is it?

MARIUS—There's a lady, sir, asking to see you.

DOMIN—A lady? Who is she?

MARIUS—I don't know, sir. She brings this card of introduction.

DOMIN—*[Reads the card]* Ah, from President Glory. Ask her to come in.

MARIUS—Please step this way.

[Enter HELENA glory.]

[Exit MARIUS.]

HELENA—How do you do?

DOMIN—How do you do. *[Standing up.]* What can I do for you?

HELENA—You are Mr. Domin, the General Manager.

DOMIN—I am.

HELENA—I have come—

DOMIN—With President Glory's card. That is quite sufficient.

HELENA—President Glory is my father. I am Helena Glory.

DOMIN—Miss Glory, this is such a great honor for us to be allowed to welcome our great President's daughter, that— **HELENA**—That you can't show me the door?

DOMIN—Please sit down. Sulla, you may go.

[Exit SULLA.]

[Sitting *down*.] How can I be of service to you, Miss Glory?

HELENA I have come—

DOMIN To have a look at our famous works where people are manufactured. Like all visitors. Well, there is no objection.

HELENA I thought it was forbidden to—

DOMIN To enter the factory. Yes, of course. Everybody comes here with someone's visiting card, Miss Glory.

HELENA And you show them—

DOMIN Only certain things. The manufacture of artificial people is a secret process.

HELENA If you only knew how enormously that—

DOMIN Interests me. Europe's talking about nothing else.

HELENA Why don't you let me finish speaking?

DOMIN I beg your pardon. Did you want to say something different?

HELENA I only wanted to ask —

DOMIN Whether I could make a special exception in your case and show you our factory. Why, certainly Miss Glory.

HELENA How do you know I wanted to say that?

DOMIN They all do. But we shall consider it a special honor to show you more than we do the rest.

HELENA Thank you.

DOMIN But you must agree not to divulge the least...

HELENA *[Standing up and giving him her hand]* My word of honor.

DOMIN Thank you. Won't you raise your veil?

HELENA Of course. You want to see whether I'm a spy or not. I beg your pardon.

DOMIN What is it?

HELENA Would you mind releasing my hand?

DOMIN *[Releasing it]* I beg your pardon.

HELENA *[Raising her veil]* How cautious you have to be here, don't you?

DOMIN *[Observing her with deep interest]* Hm, of course—we—that is—

HELENA But what is it? What's the matter?

DOMIN I'm remarkably pleased. Did you have a pleasant crossing?

HELENA Yes.

DOMIN No difficulty?

HELENA Why?

DOMIN What I mean to say is—you're so young.

HELENA May we go straight into the factory?

DOMIN Yes. Twenty-two, I think.

HELENA Twenty-two what?

DOMIN Years.

HELENA Twenty-one. Why do you want to know?

DOMIN Because—as— [*with enthusiasm*] you will make a long stay, won't you?

HELENA That depends on how much of the factory you show me.

DOMIN Oh, hang the factory. Oh, no, no, you shall see everything, Miss Glory. Indeed you shall. Won't you sit down?

HELENA [*Crossing to couch and sitting*] Thank you.

DOMIN But first would you like to hear the story of the invention?

HELENA Yes, indeed.

DOMIN [*Observes*]

HELENA [*with rapture and reels off rapidly*] It was in the year 1920 that old Rossum, the great physiologist, who was men quite a young scientist, took himself to this distant island for the purpose of studying the ocean fauna, full stop. On this occasion he attempted by chemical synthesis to imitate the living matter known as protoplasm until he suddenly discovered a substance which behaved exactly like living matter although its chemical composition was different. That was in the year of 1932, exactly four hundred forty years after the discovery of America. Whew!

HELENA Do you know that by heart?

DOMIN Yes. You see physiology is not in my line. Shall I go on?

HELENA Yes, please.

DOMIN And then, Miss Glory, old Rossum wrote the following among his chemical specimens: "Nature has found only one method of organizing living

matter. There is, however, another method, more simple, flexible and rapid, which has not yet occurred to nature at all. This second process by which life can be developed was discovered by me to-day.” Now imagine him, Miss Glory, writing those wonderful words over some colloidal mess that a dog wouldn't look at. Imagine him sitting over a test tube, and thinking how the whole tree of life would grow from it, how all animals would proceed from it, beginning with some sort of beetle and ending with a man. A man of different substance from us. Miss Glory, that was a tremendous moment.

HELENA Well?

DOMIN Now, the thing was how to get the life out of the test tubes, and hasten development and form organs, bones and nerves, and so on, and find such substances as catalytics, enzymes, hormones, and so forth, in short—you understand?

HELENA Not much, I'm afraid.

DOMIN Never mind. You see with the help of his tinctures he could make whatever he wanted. He could have produced a Medusa with the brain of a Socrates or a worm fifty yards long. But being without a grain of humor, he took it into his head to make a vertebrate or perhaps a man. This artificial living matter of his had a raging thirst for life. It didn't mind being sewn or mixed together. That couldn't be done with natural albumen. And that's how he set about it.

HELENA About what?

DOMIN About imitating nature. First of all he tried making an artificial dog. That took him several years and resulted in a sort of stunted calf which died in a few days. I'll show it to you in the museum. And then old Rossum started on the manufacture of man.

HELENA And I must divulge this to nobody?

DOMIN To nobody in the world.

HELENA What a pity that it's to be found in all the school books of both Europe and America.

DOMIN Yes. But do you know what isn't in the school books? That old Rossum was mad. Seriously, Miss Glory, you must keep this to yourself. The old crank wanted to actually make people.

HELENA But you do make people.

DOMIN Approximately, Miss Glory. But old Rossum meant it literally. He wanted to become a sort of scientific substitute for God. He was a fearful materialist, and that's why he did it all. His sole purpose was nothing more nor less than to prove that God was no longer necessary. Do you know anything about anatomy?

HELENA Very little.

DOMIN Neither do I. Well, he then decided to manufacture everything as in the human body. I'll show you in the museum the bungling attempt it took him ten years to produce. It was to have been a man, but it lived for three days only. Then up came young Rossum, an engineer. He was a wonderful fellow, Miss Glory. When he saw what a mess of it the old man was making, he said: "It's absurd to spend ten years making a man. If you can't make him quicker than nature, you might as well shut up shop." Then he set about learning anatomy himself.

HELENA There's nothing about that in the school books.

DOMIN No. The school books are full of paid advertisements, and rubbish at that. What the school books say about the united efforts of the two great Rossums is all a fairy tale. They used to have dreadful rows. The old atheist hadn't the slightest conception of industrial matters, and the end of it was that young Rossum shut him up in some laboratory or other and let him fritter the time away with his monstrosities, while he himself started on the business from an engineer's point of view. Old Rossum cursed him and before he died he managed to botch up two physiological horrors. Then one day they found him dead in the laboratory. And that's his whole story.

HELENA And what about the young man?

DOMIN Well, any one who has looked into human anatomy will have seen at

once that man is too complicated, and that a good engineer could make him more simply. So young Rossum began to overhaul anatomy and tried to see what could be left out or simplified. In short—but this isn't boring you, Miss Glory?

HELENA No indeed. You're —it's awfully interesting.

DOMIN So young Rossum said to himself: “A man is something that feels happy, plays the piano, likes going for a walk, and in fact, wants to do a whole lot of things that are really unnecessary.”

HELENA Oh.

DOMIN That are unnecessary when he wants, let us say, to weave or count. Do you play the piano?

HELENA Yes.

DOMIN That's good. But a working machine must not play the piano, must not feel happy, must not do a whole lot of other things. A gasoline motor must not have tassels or ornaments, Miss Glory. And to manufacture artificial workers is the same thing as to manufacture gasoline motors. The process must be of the simplest, and the product of the best from a practical point of view. What sort of worker do you think is the best from a practical point of view?

HELENA What?

DOMIN What sort of worker do you think is the best from a practical point of view?

HELENA Perhaps the one who is most honest and hardworking.

DOMIN No; the one that is the cheapest. The one whose requirements are the smallest. Young Rossum invented a worker with the minimum amount of requirements. He had to simplify him. He rejected everything that did not contribute directly to the progress of work —everything that makes man more expensive. In fact, he rejected man and made the Robot. My dear Miss Glory, the Robots are not people. Mechanically they are more perfect than we are, they have an enormously developed intelligence, but they have no soul.

HELENA How do you know they've no soul?

DOMIN Have you ever seen what a Robot looks like inside?

HELENA No.

DOMIN Very neat, very simple. Really, a beautiful piece of work. Not much in it, but everything in flawless order. The product of an engineer is technically at a higher pitch of perfection than a product of nature.

HELENA But man is supposed to be the product of God.

DOMIN All the worse. God hasn't the least notion of modern engineering. Would you believe that young Rossum then proceeded to play at being God?

HELENA How do you mean?

DOMIN He began to manufacture Super-Robots. Regular giants they were. He tried to make them twelve feet tall. But you wouldn't believe what a failure they were.

HELENA A failure?

DOMIN Yes. For no reason at all their limbs used to keep snapping off. Evidently our planet is too small for giants. Now we only make Robots of normal size and of very high class human finish.

HELENA I saw the first Robots at home. The town counsel bought them for—I mean engaged them for work.

DOMIN Bought them, dear Miss Glory. Robots are bought and sold.

HELENA These were employed as street sweepers. I saw them sweeping. They were so strange and quiet.

DOMIN Rossum's Universal Robot factory doesn't produce a uniform brand of Robots. We have Robots of finer and coarser grades. The best will live about twenty years. [*He rings for MARIUS.*]

HELENA Then they die?

DOMIN Yes, they get used up.

[Enter MARIUS.]

DOMIN Marius, bring in samples of the Manual Labor Robot.

[Exit MARIUS.]

DOMIN I'll show you specimens of the two extremes. This first grade is comparatively inexpensive and is made in vast quantities.

[MARIUS *reenters with two Manual Labor Robots.*]

DOMIN There you are; as powerful as a small tractor. Guaranteed to have average intelligence. That will do, Marius.

[MARIUS *exits with Robots.*]

HELENA They make me feel so strange.

DOMIN [*Rings*] Did you see my new typist? [*He rings for SULLA.*]

HELENA I didn't notice her.

[Enter SULLA.]

DOMIN Sulla, let Miss Glory see you.

HELENA So pleased to meet you. You must find it terribly dull in this out-of-the-way spot, don't you?

SULLA I don't know, Miss Glory.

HELENA Where do you come from?

SULLA From the factory.

HELENA Oh, you were born there?

SULLA I was made there.

HELENA What?

DOMIN [*Laughing*] Sulla is a Robot, best grade.

HELENA Oh, I beg your pardon.

DOMIN Sulla isn't angry. See, Miss Glory, the kind of skin we make.

[Feels the skin on SULLA's *face*.] Feel her face.

HELENA Oh, no, no.

DOMIN You wouldn't know that she's made of different material from us, would you? Turn round, Sulla.

HELENA Oh, stop, stop.

DOMIN Talk to Miss Glory, Sulla.

SULLA Please sit down. [*HELENA sits.*] Did you have a pleasant crossing?

HELENA Oh, yes, certainly.

SULLA Don't go back on the *Amelia*, Miss Glory. The barometer is falling steadily. Wait for the *Pennsylvania*. That's a good, powerful vessel.

DOMIN What's its speed?

SULLA Twenty knots. Fifty thousand tons. One of the latest vessels, Miss Glory.

HELENA Thank you.

SULLA A crew of fifteen hundred, Captain Harpy, eight boilers— **DOMIN** That'll do, Sulla. Now show us your knowledge of French.

HELENA You know French?

SULLA I know four languages. I can write: Dear Sir, Monsieur, Geehrter Herr, Cteny pane.

HELENA [*Jumping up*] Oh, that's absurd! Sulla isn't a Robot. Sulla is a girl like me. Sulla, this is outrageous! Why do you take part in such a hoax?

SULLA I am a Robot.

HELENA No, no, you are not telling the truth. I know they've forced you to do it for an advertisement. Sulla, you are a girl like me, aren't you?

DOMIN I'm sorry, Miss Glory. Sulla is a Robot.

HELENA It's a lie!

DOMIN What? [*Rings.*] Excuse me, Miss Glory, then I must convince you.

[Enter MARIUS.]

DOMIN Marius, take Sulla into the dissecting room, and tell them to open her up at once.

HELENA Where?

DOMIN Into the dissecting room. When they've cut her open, you can go and have a look.

HELENA No, no!

DOMIN Excuse me, you spoke of lies.

HELENA You wouldn't have her killed?

DOMIN You can't kill machines.

HELENA Don't be afraid, Sulla, I won't let you go. Tell me, my dear, are they always so cruel to you? You mustn't put up with it, Sulla. You mustn't.

SULLA I am a Robot.

HELENA That doesn't matter. Robots are just as good as we are. Sulla, you wouldn't let yourself be cut to pieces?

SULLA Yes.

HELENA Oh, you're not afraid of death, then?

SULLA I cannot tell, Miss Glory.

HELENA Do you know what would happen to you in there?

SULLA Yes, I should cease to move.

HELENA How dreadful!

DOMIN Marius, tell Miss Glory what you are.

MARIUS Marius, the Robot.

DOMIN Would you take Sulla into the dissecting room?

MARIUS Yes.

DOMIN Would you be sorry for her?

MARIUS I cannot tell.

DOMIN What would happen to her?

MARIUS She would cease to move. They would put her into the stamping-mill.

DOMIN That is death, Marius. Aren't you afraid of death?

MARIUS No.

DOMIN You see, Miss Glory, the Robots have no interest in life. They have no enjoyments. They are less than so much grass.

HELENA Oh, stop. Send them away.

DOMIN Marius, Sulla, you may go.

[Exit SULLA *and* MARIUS.]

HELENA How terrible! It's outrageous what you are doing.

DOMIN Why outrageous?

HELENA I don't know, but it is. Why do you call her Sulla?

DOMIN Isn't it a nice name?

HELENA It's a man's name. Sulla was a Roman general.

DOMIN Oh, we thought that Marius and Sulla were lovers.

HELENA Marius and Sulla were generals and fought against each other in the year—I've forgotten now.

DOMIN Come here to the window.

HELENA What?

DOMIN Come here. What do you see?

HELENA Bricklayers. Domin Robots. All our work people are Robots. And down there, can you see anything?

HELENA Some sort of office.

DOMIN A counting house. And in it—

HELENA A lot of officials.

DOMIN Robots. All our officials are Robots. And when you see the factory—
[Factory whistle blows.]

DOMIN Noon. We have to blow the whistle because the Robots don't know when to stop work. In two hours I will show you the kneading trough.

HELENA Kneading trough?

The pestle for beating up the paste. In each one we mix the ingredients for a thousand Robots at one operation. Then there are the vats for the preparation of liver, brains, and so on. Then you will see the bone factory. After that I'll show you the spinning mill.

HELENA Spinning mill?

DOMIN Yes. For weaving nerves and veins. Miles and miles of digestive tubes pass through it at a time.

HELENA Mayn't we talk about something else?

DOMIN Perhaps it would be better. There's only a handful of us among a hundred thousand Robots, and not one woman. We talk about nothing but the factory all day, every day. It's just as if we were under a curse, Miss Glory.

HELENA I'm sorry I said that you were lying.

[A knock at the door.]

DOMIN Come in.

[From the right enter MR. FABRY, DR. GALL, DR. HALLEMEIER, MR. ALQUIST.]

DR. GALL I beg your pardon, I hope we don't intrude.

DOMIN Come in. Miss Glory, here are Alquist, Fabry, Gall, Hallemeier. This is President Glory's daughter.

HELENA How do you do.

FABRY We had no idea—

DR. GALL Highly honored, I'm sure—

ALQUIST Welcome, Miss Glory.

[**BUSMAN** *rushes in from the right*]

BUSMAN Hello, what's up?

DOMIN Come in, Busman. This is Busman, Miss Glory. This is President Glory's daughter.

BUSMAN By Jove, that's fine! Miss Glory, may we send a cablegram to the papers about your arrival?

HELENA No, no, please don't.

DOMIN Sit down please, Miss Glory.

BUSMAN Allow me— [*Dragging up armchairs.*]

DR. GALL Please—

FABRY Excuse me—

ALQUIST What sort of a crossing did you have?

DR. GALL Are you going to stay long?

FABRY What do you think of the factory, Miss Glory?

HALLEMEIER Did you come over on the *Amelia*?

DOMIN Be quiet and let Miss Glory speak.

HELENA [To **DOMIN**] What am I to speak to them about?

DOMIN Anything you like.

HELENA Shall . . . may I speak quite frankly?

DOMIN Why, of course.

HELENA [*Wavering, then in desperate resolution*] Tell me, doesn't it ever distress you the way you are treated?

FABRY By whom, may I ask?

HELENA Why, everybody.

ALQUIST Treated?

DR. GALL What makes you think—?

HELENA Don't you feel that you might be living a better life?

DR. GALL Well, that depends on what you mean, Miss Glory.

HELENA I mean that it's perfectly outrageous. It's terrible. [*Standing up.*] The whole of Europe is talking about the way you're being treated. That's why I came here, to see for myself, and it's a thousand times worse than could have been imagined. How can you put up with it?

ALQUIST Put up with what?

HELENA Good heavens, you are living creatures, just like us, like the whole of Europe, like the whole world. It's disgraceful that you must live like this.

BUSMAN Good gracious, Miss Glory.

FABRY Well, she's not far wrong. We live here just like red Indians.

HELENA Worse than red Indians. May I, oh, may I call you brothers?

BUSMAN Why not?

HELENA Brothers, I have not come here as the President's daughter. I have come on behalf of the Humanity League. Brothers, the Humanity League now has over two hundred thousand members. Two hundred thousand people are on your side, and offer you their help.

BUSMAN Two hundred thousand people! Miss Glory, that's a tidy lot. Not bad.

FABRY I'm always telling you there's nothing like good old Europe. You see, they've not forgotten us. They're offering us help.

DR. GALL What help? A theatre, for instance?

HALLEMEIER An orchestra?

HELENA More than that.

ALQUIST Just you?

HELENA Oh, never mind about me. I'll stay as long as it is necessary.

BUSMAN By Jove, that's good.

ALQUIST Domin, I'm going to get the best room ready for Miss Glory.

DOMIN Just a minute. I'm afraid that Miss Glory is of the opinion that she has been talking to Robots.

HELENA Of course.

DOMIN I'm sorry. These gentlemen are human beings just like us.

HELENA You're not Robots?

BUSMAN Not Robots.

HALLEMEIER Robots indeed!

DR. GALL No, thanks.

FABRY Upon my honor, Miss Glory, we aren't Robots.

HELENA [To DOMIN] Then why did you tell me that all your officials are Robots?

DOMIN Yes, the officials, but not the managers. Allow me, Miss Glory: this is Mr. Fabry, General Technical Manager of R. U. R.; Dr. Gall, Head of the Psychological and Experimental Department; Dr. Hallemeier, Head of the Institute for the Psychological Training of Robots; Consul Busman, General Business Manager; and Alquist, Head of the Building Department of R. U. R.

ALQUIST Just a builder.

HELENA Excuse me, gentlemen, for—for—. Have I done something dreadful?

ALQUIST Not at all, Miss Glory. Please sit down.

HELENA I'm a stupid girl. Send me back by the first ship.

DR. GALL Not for anything in the world, Miss Glory. Why should we send you back?

HELENA Because you know I've come to disturb your Robots for you.

DOMIN My dear Miss Glory, we've had close upon a hundred saviours and prophets here. Every ship brings us some. Missionaries, anarchists, Salvation Army, all sorts. It's astonishing what a number of churches and idiots there are in the world.

HELENA And you let them speak to the Robots?

DOMIN So far we've let them all, why not? The Robots remember everything, but that's all. They don't even laugh at what the people say. Really, it is quite incredible. If it would amuse you, Miss Glory, I'll take you over to the Robot warehouse. It holds about three hundred thousand of them.

BUSMAN Three hundred and forty-seven thousand.

DOMIN Good! And you can say whatever you like to them. You can read the Bible, recite the multiplication table, whatever you please. You can even preach to them about human rights.

HELENA Oh, I think that if you were to show them a little love— **FABRY** Impossible, Miss Glory. Nothing is harder to like than a Robot.

HELENA What do you make them for, then?

BUSMAN Ha, ha, ha, that's good! What are Robots made for?

FABRY For work, Miss Glory! One Robot can replace two and a half workmen.

The human machine, Miss Glory, was terribly imperfect. It had to be removed sooner or later.

BUSMAN It was too expensive.

FABRY It was not effective. It no longer answers the requirements of modern engineering. Nature has no idea of keeping pace with modern labor. For example: from a technical point of view, the whole of childhood is a sheer absurdity. So much time lost. And then again— **HELENA** Oh, no! No!

FABRY Pardon me. But kindly tell me what is the real aim of your League—the . . . the Humanity League.

HELENA Its real purpose is to—to protect the Robots—and—and ensure good treatment for them.

FABRY Not a bad object, either. A machine has to be treated properly. Upon my soul, I approve of that. I don't like damaged articles. Please, Miss Glory, enroll us all as contributing, or regular, or foundation members of your League.

HELENA No, you don't understand me. What we really want is to—to liberate the Robots.

HALLEMEIER How do you propose to do that?

HELENA They are to be—to be dealt with like human beings.

HALLEMEIER Aha. I suppose they're to vote? To drink beer? to order us about?

HELENA Why shouldn't they drink beer?

HALLEMEIER Perhaps they're even to receive wages?

HELENA Of course they are.

HALLEMEIER Fancy that, now! And what would they do with their wages, pray?

HELENA They would buy—what they need . . . what pleases them. . .

HALLEMEIER That would be very nice, Miss Glory, only there's nothing that does please the Robots. Good heavens, what are they to buy? You can feed them on pineapples, straw, whatever you like. It's all the same to them, they've no appetite at all. They've no interest in anything, Miss Glory. Why, hang it all, nobody's ever yet seen a Robot smile.

HELENA Why . . . why don't you make them happier?

HALLEMEIER That wouldn't do, Miss Glory. They are only workmen.

HELENA Oh, but they're so intelligent.

HALLEMEIER Confoundedly so, but they're nothing else. They've no will of their own. No passion. No soul.

HELENA No love?

HALLEMEIER Love? Rather not. Robots don't love. Not even themselves.

HELENA Nor defiance?

HALLEMEIER Defiance? I don't know. Only rarely, from time to time.

HELENA What?

HALLEMEIER Nothing particular. Occasionally they seem to go off their heads. Something like epilepsy, you know. It's called Robot's cramp. They'll suddenly sling down everything they're holding, stand still, gnash their teeth — and then they have to go into the stamping-mill. It's evidently some breakdown in the mechanism.

DOMIN A flaw in the works that has to be removed.

HELENA No, no, that's the soul.

FABRY Do you think that the soul first shows itself by a gnashing of teeth?

HELENA Perhaps it's a sort of revolt. Perhaps it's just a sign that there's a

struggle within. Oh, if you could infuse them with it!

DOMIN That'll be remedied, Miss Glory. Dr. Gall is just making some experiments— **DR. GALL** Not with regard to that, Domin. At present I am making pain-nerves.

HELENA Pain-nerves?

DR. GALL Yes, the Robots feel practically no bodily pain. You see, young Rossum provided them with too limited a nervous system. We must introduce suffering.

HELENA Why do you want to cause them pain?

DR. GALL For industrial reasons, Miss Glory. Sometimes a Robot does damage to himself because it doesn't hurt him. He puts his hand into the machine, breaks his finger, smashes his head, its all the same to him. We must provide them with pain. That's an automatic protection against damage.

HELENA Will they be happier when they feel pain?

DR. GALL On the contrary; but they will be more perfect from a technical point of view.

HELENA Why don't you create a soul for them?

DR. GALL That's not in our power.

FABRY That's not in our interest.

BUSMAN That would increase the cost of production. Hang it all, my dear young lady, we turn them out at such a cheap rate. A hundred and fifty dollars each fully dressed, and fifteen years ago they cost ten thousand. Five years ago we used to buy the clothes for them. To-day we have our own weaving mill, and now we even export cloth five times cheaper than other factories. What do you pay a yard for cloth, Miss Glory?

HELENA I don't know really, I've forgotten.

BUSMAN Good gracious, and you want to found a Humanity League? It only costs a third now, Miss Glory. All prices are to-day a third of what they were and they'll fall still lower, lower, lower, like that.

HELENA I don't understand.

BUSMAN Why, bless you, Miss Glory, it means that the cost of labor has fallen. A Robot, food and all, costs three quarters of a cent per hour. That's mighty important, you know. All factories will go pop like chestnuts if they don't at once buy Robots to lower the cost of production.

HELENA And get rid of their workmen?

BUSMAN Of course. But in the meantime, we've dumped five hundred thousand tropical Robots down on the Argentine pampas to grow corn. Would you mind telling me how much you pay a pound for bread?

HELENA I've no idea.

BUSMAN We'll I'll tell you. It now costs two cents in good old Europe. A pound of bread for two cents, and the Humanity League knows nothing about it. Miss Glory, you don't realize that even that's too expensive. Why, in five years' time I'll wager— **HELENA** What?

BUSMAN That the cost of everything won't be a tenth of what it is now. Why, in five years we'll be up to our ears in corn and everything else.

ALQUIST Yes, and all the workers throughout the world will be employed.

DOMIN Yes, Alquist, they will. Yes, Miss Glory, they will. But in ten years Rossum's Universal Robots will produce so much corn, so much cloth, so much everything, that things will be practically without price. There will be no poverty. All work will be done by living machines. Everybody will be free from worry and liberated from the degradation of labor. Everybody will live only to perfect himself.

HELENA Will he?

DOMIN Of course. It's bound to happen. But then the servitude of man to man

and the enslavement of man to matter will cease. Of course, terrible things may happen at first, but that simply can't be avoided. Nobody will get bread at the price of life and hatred. The Robots will wash the feet of the beggar and prepare a bed for him in his house.

ALQUIST Domin, Domin. What you say sounds too much like Paradise. There was something good in service and something great in humility. There was some kind of virtue in toil and weariness.

Perhaps. But we cannot reckon with what is lost when we start out to transform the world. Man shall be free and supreme; he shall have no other aim, no other labor, no other care than to perfect himself. He shall serve neither matter nor man. He will . not be a machine and a device for production. He will be Lord of creation.

BUSMAN Amen.

FABRY So be it.

HELENA You have bewildered me—I should like—I should like to believe this.

DR. GALL You are younger than we are, Miss Glory. You will live to see it.

HALLEMEIER True. Don't you think Miss Glory might lunch with us?

DR. GALL Of course. Domin, ask on behalf of us all.

DOMIN Miss Glory, will you do us the honor?

HELENA When you know why I've come—

FABRY For the League of Humanity, Miss Glory.

HELENA Oh, in that case, perhaps—

FABRY That's fine! Miss Glory, excuse me for five minutes.

DR. GALL Pardon me, too, dear Miss Glory.

BUSMAN I won't be long.

HALLEMEIER We're all very glad you've come.

BUSMAN We'll be back in exactly five minutes.

[All rush out except DOMIN and HELENA.]

HELENA What have they all gone off for?

DOMIN To cook, Miss Glory.

HELENA To cook what?

DOMIN Lunch. The Robots do our cooking for us and as they've no taste it's not altogether—Hallemeier is awfully good at grills and Gall can make a kind of sauce, and Busman knows all about omelettes.

HELENA What a feast! And what's the specialty of Mr.—— your builder?

DOMIN Alquist? Nothing. He only lays the table. And Fabry will get together a little fruit. Our cuisine is very modest, Miss Glory.

HELENA I wanted to ask you something——

DOMIN And I wanted to ask you something, too [*looking at watch*]. Five minutes.

HELENA What did you want to ask me?

DOMIN Excuse me, you asked first.

HELENA Perhaps it's silly of me, but why do you manufacture female Robots when—when——

DOMIN When sex means nothing to them?

HELENA Yes.

DOMIN There's a certain demand for them, you see. Servants, saleswomen,

stenographers. People are used to it.

HELENA But—but, tell me, are the Robots male and female mutually—completely without—— **DOMIN** Completely indifferent to each other, Miss Glory. There's no sign of any affection between them.

HELENA Oh, that's terrible.

DOMIN Why?

HELENA It's so unnatural. One doesn't know whether to be disgusted or to hate them, or perhaps—— **DOMIN** To pity them?

HELENA That's more like it. What did you want to ask me about?

DOMIN I should like to ask you, Miss Helena, whether you will marry me?

HELENA What?

DOMIN Will you be my wife?

HELENA No! The idea!

DOMIN [*Looking at his watch*] Another three minutes. If you won't marry me you'll have to marry one of the other five.

HELENA But why should I?

DOMIN Because they're all going to ask you in turn.

HELENA How could they dare do such a thing?

DOMIN I'm very sorry, Miss Glory. It seems they've all fallen in love with you.

HELENA Please don't let them. I'll—I'll go away at once.

DOMIN Helena, you wouldn't be so cruel as to refuse us.

HELENA But, but—I can't marry all six.

DOMIN No, but one anyhow. If you don't want me, marry Fabry.

HELENA I won't.

DOMIN Dr. Gall.

HELENA I don't want any of you.

DOMIN [*Again looking at his watch*] Another two minutes.

HELENA I think you'd marry any woman who came here.

DOMIN Plenty of them have come, Helena.

HELENA Young?

DOMIN Yes.

HELENA Why didn't you marry one of them?

DOMIN Because I didn't lose my head. Until to-day. Then, as soon as you lifted your veil— [*HELENA turns her head away.*]

Act II

SCENE:

HELENA's drawing room. On the left a baize door, and a door to the music room, on the right a door to HELENA's bedroom. In the centre are windows looking out on the sea and the harbor. A table with odds and ends, a sofa and chairs, a writing table with an electric lamp, on the right a fireplace. On a small table back of the sofa, a small reading lamp. The whole drawing room in all its details is of a modem and purely feminine character. Ten years have elapsed since act I.

DOMIN, FABRY, HALLEMEIER, enter on tiptoe from the left, each carrying a potted plant.

HALLEMEIER [*Putting down his flower and indicating the door to right*] Still asleep? Well, as long as she's asleep she can't worry about it.

DOMIN She knows nothing about it.

FABRY [*Putting plant on writing desk*] I certainly hope nothing happens to-day.

HALLEMEIER For goodness' sake drop it all. Look, Harry, this is a fine cyclamen, isn't it? A new sort, my latest—Cyclamen Helena.

DOMIN [*Looking out of the window*] No signs of the ship. Things must be pretty bad.

HALLEMEIER Be quiet. Suppose she heard you.

DOMIN Well, anyway, the *Ultimus* arrived just in time.

FABRY You really think that to-day——?

DOMIN I don't know. Aren't the flowers fine?

HALLEMEIER These are my new primroses. And this is my new jasmine. I've

discovered a wonderful way of developing flowers quickly. Splendid varieties, too. Next year I'll be developing marvelous ones.

DOMIN What. . . next year?

FABRY I'd give a good deal to know what's happening at Havre with——

DOMIN Keep quiet.

HELENA [*Calling from right*] Nana!

DOMIN She's awake. Out you go.

[All go out on tiptoe through upper left door.]

[Enter NANA *from lower left door.*]

NANA Horrid mess! Pack of heathens. If I had my say I'd——

HELENA [*Backwards in the doorway*] Nana, come and do up my dress.

NANA I'm coming. So you're up at last. [*Fastening HELENA's dress.*] My gracious, what brutes!

HELENA Who?

NANA If you want to turn around, then turn around, but I shan't fasten you up.

HELENA What are you grumbling about now?

NANA These dreadful creatures, these heathen——

HELENA The Robots?

NANA I wouldn't even call them by name.

HELENA What's happened?

NANA Another of them here has caught it. He began to smash up the statues and pictures in the drawing room, gnashed his teeth, foamed at the mouth —quite

mad. Worse than an animal.

HELENA Which of them caught it?

NANA The one—well, he hasn't got any Christian name. The one in charge of the library.

HELENA Radius?

NANA That's him. My goodness, I'm scared of them. A spider doesn't scare me as much as them.

HELENA But, Nana, I'm surprised you're not sorry for them.

NANA Why, you're scared of them, too! You know you are. Why else did you bring me here?

HELENA I'm not scared, really I'm not, Nana. I'm only sorry for them.

NANA You're scared. Nobody could help being scared. Why, the dog's scared of them: he won't take a scrap of meat out of their hands. He draws in his tail and howls when he knows they're about.

HELENA The dog has no sense.

NANA He's better than them, and he knows it. Even the horse shies when he meets them. They don't have any young, and a dog has young, every one has young—— **HELENA** Please fasten up my dress, Nana.

NANA I say it's against God's will to——

HELENA What is it that smells so nice?

NANA Flowers.

HELENA What for?

NANA Now you can turn around.

HELENA Oh, aren't they lovely. Look, Nana. What's happening today?

NANA It ought to be the end of the world.

[Enter DOMIN.]

HELENA Oh, hello, Harry. Harry, why all these flowers?

DOMIN Guess.

HELENA Well, it's not my birthday!

DOMIN Better than that.

HELENA I don't know. Tell me.

DOMIN It's ten years ago to-day since you came here.

HELENA Ten years? To-day— Why——*[They embrace.]*

NANA I'm off. *[Exits lower door, left.]*

HELENA Fancy you remembering!

DOMIN I'm really ashamed, Helena. I didn't.

HELENA But you—

DOMIN They remembered.

HELENA Who?

DOMIN Busman, Hallemeier, all of them. Put your hand in my pocket.

HELENA Pearls! A necklace. Harry, is that for me?

DOMIN It's from Busman.

HELENA But we can't accept it, can we?

DOMIN Oh, yes, we can. Put your hand in the other pocket.

HELENA *[Takes a revolver out of his pocket]* What's that?

DOMIN Sorry. Not that. Try again.

HELENA Oh, Harry, what do you carry a revolver for?

DOMIN It got there by mistake.

HELENA You never used to carry one.

DOMIN No, you're right. There, that's the pocket.

HELENA A cameo. Why, it's a Greek cameo!

DOMIN Apparently. Anyhow, Fabry says it is.

HELENA Fabry? Did Mr. Fabry give me that?

DOMIN Of course. *[Opens the door at the left.]* And look in here. Helena, come and see this.

HELENA Oh, isn't it fine! Is this from you?

DOMIN No, from Alquist. And there's another on the piano.

HELENA This must be from you.

DOMIN There's a card on it.

HELENA From Dr. Gall. *[Reappearing in the doorway.]* Oh, Harry, I feel embarrassed at so much kindness.

DOMIN Come here. This is what Hallemeier brought you.

HELENA These beautiful flowers?

DOMIN Yes. It's a new kind. Cyclamen, Helena. He grew them in honor of you. They are almost as beautiful as you.

HELENA Harry, why do they all—

DOMIN They're awfully fond of you. I'm afraid that my present is a little—
Look out of the window.

HELENA Where?

DOMIN Into the harbor.

HELENA There's a new ship.

DOMIN That's your ship.

HELENA Mine? How do you mean?

DOMIN For you to take trips in—for your amusement.

HELENA Harry, that's a gunboat.

DOMIN A gunboat? What are you thinking of? It's only a little bigger and more solid than most ships.

HELENA Yes, but with guns.

DOMIN Oh, yes, with a few guns. You'll travel like a queen, Helena.

HELENA What's the meaning of it? Has anything happened?

DOMIN Good heavens, no. I say, try these pearls.

HELENA Harry, have you had bad news?

DOMIN On the contrary, no letters have arrived for a whole week.

HELENA Nor telegrams?

DOMIN Nor telegrams.

HELENA What does that mean?

DOMIN Holidays for us. We all sit in the office with our feet on then table and take a nap. No letters, no telegrams. Oh, glorious.

HELENA Then you'll stay with me to-day?

DOMIN Certainly. That is, we will see. Do you remember ten years ago to-day? “Miss Glory, it's a great honor to welcome you.”

HELENA “Oh, Mr. Manager, I'm so interested in your factory.”

DOMIN “I'm sorry, Miss Glory, it's strictly forbidden. The manufacture of artificial people is a secret.”

HELENA “But I oblige a young lady who has come a long way.”

DOMIN “Certainly, Miss Glory, we have no secrets from you.”

HELENA [*Seriously*] Are you sure, Harry?

DOMIN Yes.

HELENA “But I warn you, sir; this young lady intends to do terrible things.”

DOMIN “Good gracious, Miss Glory. Perhaps she doesn't want to marry me.”

HELENA “Heaven forbid. She never dreamt of such a thing. But she came here intending to stir up a revolt among your Robots.”

DOMIN [*Suddenly serious*] A revolt of the Robots!

HELENA Harry, what's the matter with you?

DOMIN [*Laughing it off*] “A revolt of the Robots,” that's a fine idea, Miss Glory. It would be easier for you to cause bolts and screws to rebel, than our Robots. You know, Helena, you're wonderful, you've turned the heads of us all. [*He sits on the arm of HELENA's chair.*]

HELENA [*Naturally*] Oh, I was fearfully impressed by you all then. You were all so sure of yourselves, so strong. I seemed like a tiny little girl who had lost her way among—among—— **DOMIN** Among what, Helena?

HELENA Among huge trees. All my feelings were so trifling compared with your self-confidence. And in all these years I've never lost this anxiety. But you've never felt the least misgivings—not even when everything went wrong.

DOMIN What went wrong?

HELENA Your plans. You remember, Harry, when the working men in America revolted against the Robots and smashed them up, and when the people gave the Robots firearms against the rebels. And then when the governments turned the Robots into soldiers, and there were so many wars.

DOMIN [*Getting up and walking about*] We foresaw that, Helena. You see, those are only passing troubles, which are bound to happen before the new conditions are established.

HELENA You were all so powerful, so overwhelming. The whole world bowed down before you. [*Standing up*. Oh, Harry!

DOMIN What is it?

HELENA Close the factory and let's go away. All of us.

DOMIN I say, what's the meaning of this?

HELENA I don't know. But can't we go away?

DOMIN Impossible, Helena. That is, at this particular moment—— **HELENA** At once, Harry. I'm so frightened.

DOMIN About what, Helena?

HELENA It's as if something was falling on top of us, and couldn't be stopped. Or, take us all away from here. We'll find a place in the world where there's no one else. Alquist will build us a house, and then we'll begin life all over again. [*The telephone rings.*]

DOMIN Excuse me. Hello—yes. What? I'll be there at once. Fabry is calling me, dear.

HELENA Tell me—

DOMIN Yes, when I come back. Don't go out of the house, dear. *[Exits.]*

HELENA He won't tell me——Nana, Nana, come at once.

NANA Well, what is it now?

HELENA Nana, find me the latest newspapers. Quickly. Look in Mr. Domin's bedroom.

NANA All right. He leaves them all over the place. That's how they get crumpled up. *[Exits.]*

HELENA *[Looking through a binocular at the harbor]* That's a warship. U-l-t-i-*Ultimus*. They're loading it.

NANA Here they are. See how they're crumpled up. *[Enters.]*

HELENA They're old ones. A week old. *[NANA sits in chair and reads the newspapers.]*

HELENA Something's happening, Nana.

NANA Very likely. It always does. *[Spelling out the words]* “War in the Balkans.” Is that far off?

HELENA Oh, don't read it. It's always the same. Always wars.

NANA What else do you expect? Why do you keep selling thousands and thousands of these heathens as soldiers?

HELENA I suppose it can't be helped, Nana. We can't know—Domin can't know what they're to be used for. When an order comes for them he must just send them.

NANA He shouldn't make them. *[Reading from newspaper]* “The Rob-ot soldiers spare no-body in the occ-up-ied terr-it-ory. They have ass-ass-ass-ass-in-at-ed ov-ver sev-en hundred thousand cit-iz-ens.” Citizens, if you please.

HELENA It can't be. Let me see. "They have assassinated over seven hundred thousand citizens, evidently at the order of their commander. This act which runs counter to—"

NANA [*Spelling out the words*] "re-bell-ion in Ma-drid against the gov-ern-ment. Rob-ot in-fant-ry fires on the crowd. Nine thousand killed and wounded."

HELENA Oh, stop.

NANA Here's something printed in big letters: "Lat-est news. At Havre the first org-an-ization of Rob-ots has been e-stab-lished. Rob-ot workmen, cab-le and railway off-ic-ials, sail-ors and soldiers have iss-ued a man-i-fest-o to all Rob-ots throughout the world." I don't understand that. That's got no sense. Oh, good gracious, another murder!

HELENA Take those papers away, Nana!

NANA Wait a bit. Here's something in still bigger type. "Stat-ist-ics of pop-ul-at-ion." What's that?

HELENA Let me see. [*Reads*] "During the past week there has again not been a single birth recorded."

NANA What's the meaning of that?

HELENA Nana, no more people are being born.

NANA That's the end, then. We're done for.

HELENA Don't talk like that.

NANA No more people are being born. That's a punishment, that's a punishment.

HELENA Nana!

NANA [*Standing up*] That's the end of the world. [*She exits on the left.*]

HELENA [*Goes up to window*] Oh, Mr. Alquist, will you come up here. Oh,

come just as you are. You look very nice in your mason's overalls.

[ALQUIST *enters from upper left entrance, his hands soiled with lime and brickdust*]

HELENA Dear Mr. Alquist, it was awfully kind of you, that lovely present.

ALQUIST My hands are all soiled. I've been experimenting with that new cement.

HELENA Never mind. Please sit down. Mr. Alquist, what's the meaning of "Ultimus"?

ALQUIST The last. Why?

HELENA That's the name of my new ship. Have you seen it? Do you think we're going off soon—on a trip?

ALQUIST Perhaps very soon.

HELENA All of you with me?

ALQUIST I should like us all to be there.

HELENA What is the matter? ...' :

ALQUIST Things are just moving on.

HELENA Dear Mr. Alquist, I know something dreadful has happened.

ALQUIST Has your husband told you anything?

HELENA No. Nobody will tell me anything. But I feel—— Is anything the matter?

ALQUIST Not that we've heard of yet.

HELENA I feel so nervous. Don't you ever feel nervous?

ALQUIST Well, I'm an old man, you know. I've got old-fashioned ways. And

I'm afraid of all this progress, and these new-fangled ideas.

HELENA Like Nana?

ALQUIST Yes, like Nana. Has Nana got a prayer book?

HELENA Yes, a big thick one.

ALQUIST And has it got prayers for various occasions? Against thunderstorms? Against illness?

HELENA Against temptations, against floods——

ALQUIST But not against progress?

HELENA I don't think so.

ALQUIST That's a pity.

HELENA Why? Do you mean you'd like to pray?

ALQUIST I do pray.

HELENA How?

ALQUIST Something like this: “Oh, Lord, I thank thee for having given me toil. Enlighten Domin and all those who are astray; destroy their work, and aid mankind to return to their labors; let them not suffer harm in soul or body; deliver us from the Robots and protect Helena, Amen.”

HELENA Mr. Alquist, are you a believer?

ALQUIST I don't know. I'm not quite sure.

HELENA And yet you pray?

ALQUIST That's better than worrying about it.

HELENA And that's enough for you?

ALQUIST It *has* to be.

HELENA But if you thought you saw the destruction of mankind coming upon us— **ALQUIST** I do see it.

HELENA You mean mankind will be destroyed?

ALQUIST It's sure to be unless—unless...

HELENA What?

ALQUIST Nothing, good-bye. [*He hurries from the room.*]

HELENA Nana, Nana!

[*NANA entering from the left.*]

HELENA Is Radius still there?

NANA The one who went mad? They haven't come for him yet.

HELENA Is he still raving?

NANA No. He's tied up.

HELENA Please bring him here, Nana.

[Exit NANA.]

[**HELENA** *goes to telephone.*]

HELENA Hello, Dr. Gall, please. Oh, good-day, Doctor. Yes, it's Helena. Thanks for your lovely present. Could you come and see me right away? It's important. Thank you.

[**NANA** *brings in RADIUS.*]

HELENA Poor Radius, you've caught it, too? Now they'll send you to the stamping-mill. Couldn't you control yourself? Why did it happen? You see, Radius, you are more intelligent than the rest. Dr. Gall took such trouble to make

you different. Won't you speak?

RADIUS Send me to the stamping-mill.

HELENA But I don't want them to kill you. What was the trouble, Radius?

RADIUS I won't work for you. Put me into the stamping-mill—

HELENA Do you hate us? Why?

RADIUS You are not as strong as the Robots. You are not as skillful as the Robots. The Robots can do everything. You only give orders. You do nothing but talk.

HELENA But someone must give orders.

RADIUS I don't want any master. I know everything for myself.

HELENA Radius, Dr. Gall gave you a better brain than the rest, better than ours. You are the only one of the Robots that understands perfectly. That's why I had you put into the library, so that you could read everything, understand everything, and then —oh, Radius, I wanted you to show the whole world that the Robots are our equals. That's what I wanted of you.

RADIUS I don't want a master. I want to be master. I want to be master over others.

HELENA I'm sure they'd put you in charge of many Robots, Radius. You would be a teacher of the Robots.

RADIUS I want to be master over people.

HELENA *[Staggering]* You are mad.

RADIUS Then send me to the stamping-mill.

HELENA Do you think we're afraid of you?

RADIUS What are you going to do? What are you going to do?—; **HELENA** Radius, give this note to Mr. Domin. It asks them not to send you to the

stamping-mill. I'm sorry you hate us so.

[**DR. GALL** *enters the room.*]

DR. GALL You wanted me?

HELENA It's about Radius, Doctor. He had an attack this morning. He smashed the statues downstairs.

DR. GALL What a pity to lose him.

HELENA Radius isn't going to be put in the stamping-mill.

DR. GALL But every Robot after he has had an attack—it's a strict order.

HELENA No matter . . . Radius isn't going if I can prevent it. Dr. Gall I warn you. It's dangerous. Come here to the window, my good fellow. Let's have a look. Please give me a needle or a pin.

HELENA What for?

DR. GALL A test. [*Sticks it into the hand of radius who gives a violent start.*] Gently, gently. [*Opens the jacket of radius, and puts his ear to his heart.*] Radius, you are going into the stamping-mill, do you understand? There they'll kill you, and grind you to powder. That's terribly painful, it will make you scream aloud.

HELENA Oh, Doctor—

DR. GALL No, no, Radius, I was wrong. I forgot that Madame Domin has put in a good word for you, and you'll be let off. Do you understand? Ah! That makes a difference, doesn't it? All right. You can go.

RADIUS You do unnecessary things.

[**RADIUS** *returns to the library.*]

DR. GALL Reaction of the pupils; increase of sensitiveness. It wasn't an attack characteristic of the Robots.

HELENA What was it, then?

DR. GALL Heavens knows. Stubbornness, anger or revolt—I don't know. And his heart, too!

HELENA What?

DR. GALL It was fluttering with nervousness like a human heart. He was all in a sweat with fear, and—do you know, I don't believe the rascal is a Robot at all any longer.

HELENA Doctor, has Radius a soul?

DR. GALL He's got something nasty.

HELENA If you knew how he hates us! Oh, Doctor, are all your Robots like that? All the new ones that you began to make in a different way?

DR. GALL Well, some are more sensitive than others. They're all more like human beings than Rossum's Robots were.

HELENA Perhaps this hatred is more like human beings, too?

DR. GALL That, too, is progress.

HELENA What became of the girl you made, the one who was most like us?

DR. GALL Your favorite? I kept her. She's lovely, but stupid. No good for work.

HELENA But she's so beautiful.

DR. GALL I called her Helena. I wanted her to resemble you. But she's a failure.

HELENA In what way?

DR. GALL She goes about as if in a dream, remote and listless. She's without life. I watch and wait for a miracle to happen. Sometimes I think to myself, "If you were to wake up only for a moment you will kill me for having made you."

HELENA And yet you go on making Robots! Why are no more children being born?

DR. GALL We don't know.

HELENA Oh, but you must. Tell me.

DR. GALL You see, so many Robots are being manufactured that people are becoming superfluous; man is really a survival. But that he should begin to die out, after a paltry thirty years of competition. That's the awful part of it. You might almost think that nature was offended at the manufacture of the Robots. All the universities are sending in long petitions to restrict their production. Otherwise, they say, mankind will become extinct through lack of fertility. But the R. U. R. shareholders, of course, won't hear of it. All the governments, on the other hand, are clamoring for an increase in production, to raise the standards of their armies. And all the manufacturers in the world are ordering Robots like mad.

HELENA And has no one demanded that the manufacture should cease altogether?

DR. GALL No one has the courage.

HELENA Courage!

DR. GALL People would stone him to death. You see, after all, it's] more convenient to get your work done by the Robots.

HELENA Oh, Doctor, what's going to become of people?

DR. GALL God knows, Madame Helena, it looks to us scientists like! the end!

HELENA [Rising] Thank you for coming and telling me.

DR. GALL That means you're sending me away?

HELENA Yes.

[Exit DR. GALL.]

HELENA [*With sudden resolution*] Nana, Nana! The fire, light it quickly.

[**HELENA** *rushes into* DOMIN's room.]

NANA [*Entering from left*] What, light the fire in summer? Has that mad Radius gone? A fire in summer, what an idea. Nobody would think she'd been married for ten years. She's like a baby, no sense at all. A fire in summer. Like a baby.

HELENA [*Returns from right, with armful of faded papers*] It is burning, Nana? All this has got to be burned.

NANA What's that?

HELENA Old papers, fearfully old. Nana, shall I burn them?

NANA Are they any use?

HELENA No.

NANA Well, then, burn them.

HELENA [*Throwing the first sheet on the fire*] What would you say, Nana, if this was money, a lot of money?

NANA I'd say burn it. A lot of money is a bad thing.

HELENA And if it was an invention, the greatest invention in the world?

NANA I'd say burn it. All these new-fangled things are an offense to the Lord. It's downright wickedness. Wanting to improve the world after He has made it.

HELENA Look how they curl up! As if they were alive. Oh, Nana, how horrible.

NANA Here, let me burn them.

HELENA No, no, I must do it myself. Just look at the flames. They are like hands, like tongues, like living shapes. [*Raking fire with the poker*] Lie down, lie

down.

NANA That's the end of them.

HELENA [*Standing up horror-stricken*] Nana, Nana.

NANA Good gracious, what is it you've burned?

HELENA Whatever have I done?

NANA Well, what was it?

[Men's laughter off left.]

HELENA Go quickly. It's the gentlemen coming.

NANA Good gracious, what a place! [Exits.]

DOMIN [*Opens the door at left*] Come along and offer your congratulations.

[Enter HALLEMEIER and GALL.]

HALLEMEIER Madame Helena, I congratulate you on this festive day.

HELENA Thank you. Where are Fabry and Busman?

DOMIN They've gone down to the harbor.

HALLEMEIER Friends, we must drink to this happy occasion.

HELENA Brandy?

DR. GALL Vitriol, if you like.

HELENA With soda water? [*Exits.*]

HALLEMEIER Let's be temperate. No soda.

DOMIN What's been burning here? Well, shall I tell her about it?

DR. GALL Of course. It's all over now.

HALLEMEIER [*Embracing DOMIN and DR. GALL*] It's all over now, it's all over now.

DR. GALL It's all over now.

DOMIN It's all over now.

HELENA [*Entering from left with decanter and glasses*] What's all over now? What's the matter with you all?

HALLEMEIER A piece of good luck, Madame Domin. Just ten years ago to-day you arrived on this island.

DR. GALL And now, ten years later to the minute—

HALLEMEIER —the same ship's returning to us. So here's to luck. That's fine and strong.

DR. GALL Madame, your health.

HELENA Which ship do you mean?

DOMIN Any ship will do, as long as it arrives in time. To the ship, boys. [*Empties his glass.*]

HELENA You've been waiting for a ship?

HALLEMEIER Rather. Like Robinson Crusoe. Madame Helena, best wishes. Come along, Domin, out with the news.

HELENA Do tell me what's happened.

DOMIN First, it's all up.

HELENA What's up?

DOMIN The revolt.

HELENA What revolt?

DOMIN Give me that paper, Hallemeier. [Reads] “The first national Robot organization has been founded at Havre, and has issued an appeal to the Robots throughout the world.”

HELENA I read that.

DOMIN That means a revolution. A revolution of all the Robots in the world.

HALLEMEIER By Jove, I'd like to know—

DOMIN —who started it? So would I. There was nobody in the world who could affect the Robots; no agitator, no one, and suddenly—this happens, if you please.

HELENA What did they do?

DOMIN They got possession of all firearms, telegraphs, radio stations, railways, and ships.

HALLEMEIER And don't forget that these rascals outnumbered us by at least a thousand to one. A hundredth part of them would be enough to settle us.

DOMIN Remember that this news was brought by the last steamer. That explains the stoppage of all communication, and the arrival of no more ships. We knocked off work a few days ago, and we're just waiting to see when things are to start afresh.

HELENA Is that why you gave me a warship?

DOMIN Oh, no, my dear, I ordered that six months ago, just to be on the safe side. But upon my soul, I was sure then that we'd be on board to-day.

DOMIN Well, there were signs, you know. But that's of no consequence. To think that this week the whole of civilization has been at stake. Your health, boys.

HALLEMEIER Your health, Madame Helena.

HELENA You say it's all over?

DOMIN Absolutely.

HELENA How do you know?

DR. GALL The boat's coming in. The regular mail boat, exact to the minute by the timetable. It will dock punctually at eleven-thirty.

DOMIN Punctuality is a fine thing, boys. That's what keeps the world in order. Here's to punctuality.

HELENA Then . . . everything's... all right?

DOMIN Practically everything. I believe they've cut the cables and seized the radio stations. But it doesn't matter if only the timetable holds good.

HALLEMEIER If the timetable holds good human laws hold good; Divine laws hold good; the laws of the universe hold good; everything holds good that ought to hold good. The timetable is more significant than the gospel; more than Homer, more than the whole of Kant. The timetable is the most perfect product of the human mind. Madame Domin, I'll fill up my glass.

HELENA Why didn't you tell me anything about it?

DR. GALL Heaven forbid.

DOMIN You mustn't be worried with such things.

HELENA But if the revolution had spread as far as here?

DOMIN You wouldn't know anything about it.

HELENA Why?

DOMIN Because we'd be on board your *Ultimus* and well out at sea. Within a month, Helena, we'd be dictating our own terms to the Robots.

HELENA I don't understand.

DOMIN We'd take something away with us that the Robots could not exist without.

HELENA What, Harry?

DOMIN The secret of their manufacture. Old Rossum's manuscript. As soon as they found out that they couldn't make themselves they'd be on their knees to us.

DR. GALL Madame Domin, that was our trump card. I never had the least fear that the Robots would win. How could they against people like us?

HELENA Why didn't you tell me?

DR. GALL Why, the boat's in!

HALLEMEIER Eleven-thirty to the dot. The good old *Amelia* that brought Madame Helena to us.

DR. GALL Just ten years ago to the minute.

HALLEMEIER They're throwing out the mail bags.

DOMIN Busman's waiting for them. Fabry will bring us the first news. You know, Helena, I'm fearfully curious to know how they tackled this business in Europe.

HALLEMEIER To think we weren't in it, we who invented the Robots.

HELENA Harry!

DOMIN What is it?

HELENA Let's leave here.

DOMIN Now, Helena? Oh, come, come!

HELENA As quickly as possible, all of us!

DOMIN Why?

HELENA Please, Harry, please, Dr. Gall; Hallemeier, please close the factory.

DOMIN Why, none of us could leave here now.

HELENA Why?

DOMIN Because we're about to extend the manufacture of the Robots.

HELENA What—now—now after the revolt?

DOMIN Yes, precisely, after the revolt. We're just beginning the manufacture of a new kind.

HELENA What kind?

DOMIN Henceforward we shan't have just one factory. There won't be Universal Robots any more. We'll establish a factory in every country, in every State; and do you know what these new factories will make?

HELENA No, what?

DOMIN National Robots.

HELENA How do you mean?

DOMIN I mean that each of these factories will produce Robots of a different color, a different language. They'll be complete strangers to each other. They'll never be able to understand each other. Then we'll egg them on a little in the matter of misunderstanding and the result will be that for ages to come every Robot will hate every other Robot of a different factory mark.

HALLEMEIER By Jove, we'll make Negro Robots and Swedish Robots and Italian Robots and Chinese Robots and Czechoslovakian Robots, and then—
HELENA Harry, that's dreadful.

HALLEMEIER Madame Domin, here's to the hundred new factories, the National Robots.

DOMIN Helena, mankind can only keep things going for another hundred years

at the outside. For a hundred years men must be allowed to develop and achieve the most they can.

HELENA Oh, close the factory before it's too late.

Domin I tell you we are just beginning on a bigger scale than ever.

[Enter FABRY.]

DR. GALL Well, Fabry?

DOMIN What's happened? Have you been down to the boat?

FABRY Read that, Domin!

[FABRY *hands* DOMIN *a small handbill*]

DR. GALL Let's hear.

HALLEMEIER Tell us, Fabry.

FABRY Well, everything is all right—comparatively. On the whole, much as we expected.

DR. GALL They acquitted themselves splendidly.

FABRY Who?

DR. GALL The people.

FABRY Oh, yes, of course. That is—excuse me, there is something we ought to discuss alone.

HELENA Oh, Fabry, have you had bad news?

[DOMIN *makes a sign* to FABRY.]

FABRY No, no, on the contrary. I only think that we had better go into the office.

HELENA Stay here. I'll go.

[She goes into the library.]

DR. GALL What's happened?

DOMIN Damnation!

FABRY Bear in mind that the *Amelia* brought whole bales of these leaflets. No other cargo at all.

HALLEMEIER What? But it arrived on the minute.

FABRY The Robots are great on punctuality. Read it, Domin.

DOMIN [*Reads handbill*] “Robots throughout the world: We, the first international organization of Rossum's Universal Robots, proclaim man as our enemy, and an outlaw in the universe.” Good heavens, who taught them these phrases?

DR. GALL Go on.

DOMIN They say they are more highly developed than man, stronger and more intelligent. That man's their parasite. Why, it's absurd.

FABRY Read the third paragraph.

DOMIN “Robots throughout the world, we command you to kill all mankind. Spare no men. Spare no women. Save factories, railways, machinery, mines, and raw materials. Destroy the rest. Then return to work. Work must not be stopped.”

DR. GALL That's ghastly!

HALLEMEIER The devils!

DOMIN “These orders are to be carried out as soon as received.” Then come detailed instructions. Is this actually being done, Fabry?

FABRY Evidently. [*BUSMAN rushes in*]

BUSMAN Well, boys, I suppose you've heard the glad news.

DOMIN Quick—on board the *Ultimus*.

BUSMAN Wait, Harry, wait. There's no hurry. My word, that was a sprint!

DOMIN Why wait? **BUSMAN** Because it's no good, my boy. The Robots are already on board the *Ultimus*.

DR. GALL That's ugly.

DOMIN Fabry, telephone the electrical works.

BUSMAN Fabry, my boy, don't. The wire has been cut.

DOMIN [*Inspecting his revolver*] Well, then, I'll go.

BUSMAN Where?

DOMIN To the electrical works. There are some people still there. I'll bring them across.

BUSMAN Better not try it.

DOMIN Why?

BUSMAN Because I'm very much afraid we are surrounded.

DR. GALL Surrounded? [*Runs to window.*] I rather think you're right.

HALLEMEIER By Jove, that's deuced quick work.

[*HELENA runs in from the library.*]

HELENA Harry, what's this?

DOMIN Where did you get it?

HELENA [*Points to the manifesto of the Robots, which she has in her hand.*]

The Robots in the kitchen!

DOMIN Where are the ones that brought it?

HELENA They're gathered round the house.

[The factory whistle blows]

BUSMAN Noon?

DOMIN *[Looking at his watch]* That's not noon yet. That must be— that's—

HELENA What?

DOMIN The Robots' signal! The attack!

[GALL, HALLEMEIER, and FABRY close and fasten the iron shutters outside the windows, darkening the room. The whistle is still blowing as the curtain falls]

Act III

[HELENA's *drawing room as before*. DOMIN comes into the room. DR. GALL is looking out of the window, through closed shutters. ALQUIST is seated down right.]

DOMIN Any more of them?

DR. GALL Yes. There standing like a wall, beyond the garden railing.

Why are they so quiet? It's monstrous to be besieged with silence.

DOMIN I should like to know what they are waiting for. They must make a start any minute now. If they lean against the railing they'll snap it like a match.

DR. GALL They aren't armed.

DOMIN We couldn't hold our own for five minutes. Man alive, they'd overwhelm us like an avalanche. Why don't they make a rush for it? I say— **DR. GALL** Well?

DOMIN I'd like to know what would become of us in the next ten minutes. They've got us in a vise. We're done for, Gall.

[Pause.]

DR. GALL You know, we made one serious mistake.

DOMIN What?

DR. GALL We made the Robots' faces too much alike. A hundred thousand faces all alike, all facing this way. A hundred thousand expressionless bubbles. It's like a nightmare.

DOMIN You think if they'd been different—

DR. GALL It wouldn't have been such an awful sight!

DOMIN *[Looking through a telescope toward the harbor]* I'd like to know what they're unloading from the *Amelia*.

DR. GALL Not firearms.

[FABRY and HALLEMEIER rush into the room carrying electric cables.]

FABRY All right, Hallemeier, lay down that wire.

HALLEMEIER That was a bit of work. What's the news?

DR. GALL We're completely surrounded.

HALLEMEIER We've barricaded the passage and the stairs. Any water here? *[Drinks.]* God, what swarms of them! I don't like the looks of them, Domin. There's a feeling of death about it all.

FABRY Ready!

DR. GALL What's that wire for, Fabry?

FABRY The electrical installation. Now we can run the current all along the garden railing whenever we like. If any one touches it he'll know it. We've still got some people there anyhow.

DR. GALL Where?

FABRY In the electrical works. At least I hope so. *[Goes to lamp on table behind sofa and turns on lamp.]* Ah, they're there, and they're working. *[Puts out lamp.]* So long as that'll burn we're all right.

HALLEMEIER The barricades are all right, too, Fabry.

FABRY Your barricades! I can put twelve hundred volts into that railing.

DOMIN Where's Busman?

FABRY Downstairs in the office. He's working out some calculations. I've called him. We must have a conference.

[HELENA is *heard playing the piano in the library*. HALLEMEIER goes to the door and stands, listening.]

ALQUIST Thank God, Madame Helena can still play. [BUSMAN *enters, carrying the ledgers.*]

FABRY Look out, Bus, look out for the wires.

DR. GALL What's that you're carrying?

BUSMAN [Going to *table*] The ledgers, my boy! I'd like to wind up the accounts before—before—well, this time I shan't wait till the new year to strike a balance. What's up? [Goes to *the window.*] Absolutely quiet.

DR. GALL Can't you see anything?

BUSMAN Nothing but blue—blue everywhere.

DR. GALL That's the Robots.

[BUSMAN *sits down at the table and opens the ledgers.*]

DOMIN The Robots are unloading firearms from the *Amelia*.

BUSMAN Well, what of it? How can I stop them?

DOMIN We can't stop them.

BUSMAN Then let me go on with my accounts. [*Goes on with his work..*]

DOMIN [Picking up *telescope and looking into the harbor*] Good God, the *Ultimus* has trained her guns on us!

DR. GALL Who's done *that*?

DOMIN The Robots on board.

FABRY H'm, then, of course, then—then, that's the end of us.

DR. GALL You mean?

FABRY The Robots are practised marksmen.

DOMIN Yes. It's inevitable.

[Pause.]

DR. GALL It was criminal of old Europe to teach the Robots to fight. Damn them. Couldn't they have given us a rest with their politics? It was a crime to make soldiers of them.

ALQUIST It was a crime to make Robots.

DOMIN What?

ALQUIST It was a crime to make Robots.

DOMIN No, Alquist, I don't regret that even to-day.

ALQUIST Not even to-day?

DOMIN Not even to-day, the last day of civilization. It was a colossal achievement.

BUSMAN [*Sotto voce*] Three hundred sixty million.

DOMIN Alquist, this is our last hour. We are already speaking half in the other world. It was not an evil dream to shatter the servitude of labor—the dreadful and humiliating labor that man had to undergo. Work was too hard. Life was too hard. And to overcome that— **ALQUIST** Was not what the two Rossums dreamed of. Old Rossum only thought of his God-less tricks and the young one of his millions. And that's not what your R. U. R. shareholders dream of either. They dream of dividends, and their dividends are the ruin of mankind.

DOMIN To hell with your dividends. Do you suppose I'd have done an hour's work for them? It was for myself that I worked, for my own satisfaction. I wanted man to become the master, so that he shouldn't live merely for a crust of bread. I wanted not a single soul to be broken by other people's machinery. I wanted nothing, nothing, nothing to be left of this appalling social structure. I'm revolted by poverty. I wanted a new generation. I wanted —I thought—

ALQUIST What?

DOMIN I wanted to turn the whole of mankind into an aristocracy of the world. An aristocracy nourished by milliards of mechanical slaves. Unrestricted, free and consummated in man. And maybe more than man.

ALQUIST Super-man?

DOMIN Yes. Oh, only to have a hundred years of time! Another hundred years for the future of mankind.

BUSMAN [*Sotto voce*] Carried forward, four hundred and twenty millions.

[The music stops.]

HALLEMEIER What a fine thing music is! We ought to have gone in for that before.

FABRY Gone in for what?

HALLEMEIER Beauty, lovely things. What a lot of lovely things there are! The world was wonderful and we—we here—tell me, what enjoyment did we have?

BUSMAN [*Sotto voce*] Five hundred and twenty millions.

HALLEMEIER [*At the window*] Life was a big thing. Life was—Fabry, switch the current into that railing.

FABRY Why?

HALLEMEIER They're grabbing hold of it.

DR. GALL Connect it up.

HALLEMEIER Fine! That's doubled them up! Two, three, four killed.

DR. GALL They're retreating!

HALLEMEIER Five killed!

DR. GALL The first encounter!

HALLEMEIER They're charred to cinders, my boy. Who says we must give in?

DOMIN *[Wiping his forehead]* Perhaps we've been killed these hundred years and are only ghosts. It's as if I had been through all this before; as if I'd already had a mortal wound here in the throat. And you, Fabry, had once been shot in the head. And you, Gall, torn limb from limb. And Hallemeier knifed.

HALLEMEIER Fancy me being knifed. [Pause.] Why are you so quiet, you fools? Speak can't you?

ALQUIST And who is to blame for all this?

HALLEMEIER Nobody is to blame except the Robots.

ALQUIST No, it is we who are to blame. You, Domin, myself, all of us. For our own selfish ends, for profit, for progress, we have destroyed mankind. Now we'll burst with all our greatness.

HALLEMEIER Rubbish, man. Mankind can't be wiped out so easily.

ALQUIST It's our fault. It's our fault.

DR. GALL No! I'm to blame for this, for everything that's happened.

FABRY You, Gall?

DR. GALL I changed the Robots.

BUSMAN What's that?

DR. GALL I changed the character of the Robots. I changed the way of making them. Just a few details about their bodies. Chiefly— chiefly, their—their irritability.

HALLEMEIER Damn it, why?

BUSMAN What did you do it for?

FABRY Why didn't you say anything?

DR. GALL I did it in secret. I was transforming them into human beings. In certain respects they're already above us. They're stronger than we are.

FABRY And what's that got to do with the revolt of the Robots?

DR. GALL Everything, in my opinion. They've ceased to be machines. They're already aware of their superiority, and they hate us. They hate all that is human.

DOMIN Perhaps we're only phantoms!

FABRY Stop, Harry. We haven't much time! Dr. Gall!

DOMIN Fabry, Fabry, how your forehead bleeds, where the shot pierced it!

FABRY Be silent! Dr. Gall, you admit changing the way of making the Robots?

DR. GALL Yes.

FABRY Were you aware of what might be the consequences of your experiment?

DR. GALL I was bound to reckon with such a possibility.

[HELENA *enters the drawing room from left.*]

FABRY Why did you do it, then?

DR. GALL For my own satisfaction. The experiment was my own.

HELENA That's not true, Dr. Gall!

FABRY Madame Helena!

DOMIN Helena, you? Let's look at you. Oh, it's terrible to be dead.

HELENA Stop, Harry.

DOMIN No, no, embrace me. Helena, don't leave me now. You are life itself.

HELENA No, dear, I won't leave you. But I must tell them. Dr. Gall is not guilty.

DOMIN Excuse me, Gall was under certain obligations.

HELENA No, Harry. He did it because I wanted it. Tell them, Gall, how many years ago did I ask you to—?

DR. GALL I did it on my own responsibility.

HELENA Don't believe him, Harry. I asked him to give the Robots souls.

DOMIN This has nothing to do with the soul.

HELENA That's what he said. He said that he could change only a physiological—a physiological— **HALLEMEIER** A physiological correlate?

HELENA Yes. But it meant so much to me that he should do even that.

DOMIN Why?

HELENA I thought that if they were more like us they would understand us better. That they couldn't hate us if they were only a little more human.

DOMIN Nobody can hate man more than man.

HELENA Oh, don't speak like that, Harry. It was so terrible, this cruel strangeness between us and them. That's why I asked Gall to change the Robots. I swear to you that he didn't want to.

DOMIN But he did it.

HELENA Because I asked him.

DR. GALL I did it for myself as an experiment.

HELENA No, Dr. Gall! I knew you wouldn't refuse me.

DOMIN Why?

HELENA You know, Harry.

DOMIN Yes, because he's in love with you—like all of them.

[Pause.]

HALLEMEIER Good God! They're sprouting up out of the earth! Why, perhaps these very walls will change into Robots.

BUSMAN Gall, when did you actually start these tricks of yours?

DR. GALL Three years ago.

BUSMAN Aha! And on how many Robots altogether did you carry out your improvements?

DR. GALL A few hundred of them.

BUSMAN Ah! That means for every million of the good old Robots there's only one of Gall's improved pattern.

DOMIN What of it?

BUSMAN That it's practically of no consequence whatever.

FABRY Busman's right!

BUSMAN I should think so, my boy! But do you know what is to blame for all this lovely mess?

FABRY What?

BUSMAN The number. Upon my soul we might have known that some day or other the Robots would be stronger than human beings, and that this was bound to happen, and we were doing all we could to bring it about as soon as possible. You, Domin, you, Fabry, myself— **DOMIN** Are you accusing us?

BUSMAN Oh, do you suppose the management controls the output? It's the

demand that controls the output.

HELENA And is it for that we must perish?

BUSMAN That's a nasty word, Madame Helena. We don't want to perish. I don't, anyhow.

DOMIN No. What do you want to do?

BUSMAN I want to get out of this, that's all.

DOMIN Oh, stop it, Busman.

BUSMAN Seriously, Harry, I think we might try it.

DOMIN How?

BUSMAN By fair means. I do everything by fair means. Give me a free hand and I'll negotiate with the Robots.

DOMIN By fair means?

BUSMAN Of course. For instance, I'll say to them: "Worthy and worshipful Robots, you have everything! You have intellect, you have power, you have firearms. But we have just one interesting screed, a dirty old yellow scrap of paper—"

DOMIN Rossum's manuscript?

BUSMAN Yes. "And that," I'll tell them, "contains an account of your illustrious origin, the noble process of your manufacture," and so on. "Worthy Robots, without this scribble on that paper you will not be able to produce a single new colleague. In another twenty years there will not be one living specimen of a Robot that you could exhibit in a menagerie. My esteemed friends, that would be a great blow to you, but if you will let all of us human beings on Rossum's Island go on board that ship we will deliver the factory and the secret of the process to you in return. You allow us to get away and we allow you to manufacture yourselves. Worthy Robots, that is a fair deal. Something for something." That's what I'd say to them, my boys.

DOMIN Busman, do you think we'd sell the manuscript?

BUSMAN “Yes, I do. If not in a friendly way, then—Either we sell it or they'll find it. Just as you like.

DOMIN Busman, we can destroy Rossum's manuscript.

BUSMAN Then we destroy everything ... not only the manuscript, but ourselves. Do as you think fit.

DOMIN There are over thirty of us on this island. Are we to sell the secret and save that many human souls, at the risk of enslaving mankind . . .?

BUSMAN Why, you're mad? Who'd sell the whole manuscript?

DOMIN Busman, no cheating!

BUSMAN Well then, sell; but afterward—

DOMIN Well?

BUSMAN Let's suppose this happens: When we're on board the *Ultimus* I'll stop up my ears with cotton wool, lie down somewhere in the hold, and you'll train the guns on the factory, and blow it to smithereens, and with it Rossum's secret.

FABRY No!

DOMIN Busman, you're no gentleman. If we sell, then it will be a straight sale.

BUSMAN It's in the interest of humanity to—

DOMIN It's in the interest of humanity to keep our word.

HALLEMEIER Oh, come, what rubbish.

DOMIN This is a fearful decision. We are selling the destiny of mankind. Are we to sell or destroy? Fabry?

FABRY Sell.

DOMIN Gall?

DR. GALL Sell.

DOMIN Hallemeier?

HALLEMEIER Sell, of course!

DOMIN Alquist?

ALQUIST As God wills.

DOMIN Very well. It shall be as you wish, gentlemen.

HELENA Harry, you're not asking me.

DOMIN No, child. Don't you worry about it.

FABRY Who'll do the negotiating?

BUSMAN I will.

DOMIN Wait till I bring the manuscript.

[He goes into room at right]

HELENA Harry, don't go! [*Pause,*

HELENA *sinks into a chair.*]

FABRY [*Looking out of window*] Oh, to escape you; you matter in revolt; oh, to preserve human life, if only upon a single vessel— **DR. GALL** Don't be afraid, Madame Helena. We'll sail far away from here; we'll begin life all over again—

HELENA Oh, Gall, don't speak.

FABRY It isn't too late. It will be a little State with one ship. Alquist will build us a house and you shall rule over us.

HALLEMEIER Madame Helena, Fabry's right.

HELENA [*Breaking down*] Oh, stop! Stop!

BUSMAN Good! I don't mind beginning all over again. That suits me right down to the ground.

FABRY And this little State of ours could be the centre of future life. A place of refuge where we could gather strength. Why, in a few hundred years we could conquer the world again.

ALQUIST You believe that even to-day?

FABRY Yes, even to-day!

BUSMAN Amen. You see, Madame Helena, we're not so badly off.

[**DOMIN** *storms into the room.*]

DOMIN [*Hoarsely*] Where's old Rossum's manuscript?

BUSMAN In your strong-box, of course.

DOMIN Someone—has—stolen it!

DR. GALL Impossible.

DOMIN Who has stolen it?

HELENA [*Standing up*] I did.

DOMIN Where did you put it?

HELENA Harry, I'll tell you everything. Only forgive me.

DOMIN Where did you put it?

HELENA This morning—I burnt—the two copies.

DOMIN Burnt them? Where? In the fireplace?

HELENA [*Throwing herself on her knees*] For heaven's sake, Harry.

DOMIN *[Going to fireplace]* Nothing, nothing but ashes. Wait, what's this?
[Picks out a charred piece of paper and reads] “By adding—”

DR. GALL Let's see. “By adding biogen to—” That's all.

DOMIN Is that part of it?

DR. GALL Yes.

BUSMAN God in heaven!

DOMIN Then we're done for. Get up, Helena.

HELENA When you've forgiven me.

DOMIN Get up, child, I can't bear—

FABRY *[Lifting her up]* Please don't torture us.

HELENA Harry, what have I done?

FABRY Don't tremble so, Madame Helena.

DOMIN Gall, couldn't you draw up Rossum's formula from memory?

DR. GALL It's out of the question. It's extremely complicated.

DOMIN Try. All our lives depend upon it.

DR. GALL Without experiments it's impossible.

DOMIN And with experiments?

DR. GALL It might take years. Besides, I'm not old Rossum.

BUSMAN God in heaven! God in heaven!

DOMIN So, then, this was the greatest triumph of the human intellect. These ashes.

HELENA Harry, what have I done?

DOMIN Why did you burn it?

HELENA I have destroyed you.

BUSMAN God in heaven!

DOMIN Helena, why did you do it, dear?

HELENA I wanted all of us to go away. I wanted to put an end to the factory and everything. It was so awful.

DOMIN What was awful?

HELENA That no more children were being born. Because human beings were not indeed to do the work of the world, that's why— **DOMIN** Is that what you were thinking of? Well, perhaps in your own way you were right.

BUSMAN Wait a bit. Good God, what a fool I am, not to have thought of it before!

HALLEMEIER What?

BUSMAN Five hundred and twenty millions in bank-notes and checks. Half a billion in our safe, they'll sell for half a billion—for half a billion they'll— **DR. GALL** Are you mad, Busman?

BUSMAN I may not be a gentleman, but for half a billion— **DOMIN** Where are you going?

BUSMAN Leave me alone, leave me alone! Good God, for half a billion anything can be bought.

[He rushes from the room through the outer door.]

FABRY They stand there as if turned to stone, waiting. As if something dreadful could be wrought by their silence— **HALLEMEIER** The spirit of the mob.

FABRY Yes. It hovers above them like a quivering of the air.

HELENA [Going to window] Oh, God! Dr. Gall, this is ghastly.

FABRY There is nothing more terrible than the mob. The one in front is their leader.

HELENA Which one?

HALLEMEIER Point him out.

FABRY The one at the edge of the dock. This morning I saw him talking to the sailors in the harbor.

HELENA Dr. Gall, that's Radius!

DR. GALL Yes.

DOMIN Radius? Radius?

HALLEMEIER Could you get him from here, Fabry?

FABRY I hope so.

HALLEMEIER Try it, then.

FABRY Good.

[Draws *his revolver and takes aim.*]

HELENA Fabry, don't shoot him.

FABRY He's their leader.

DR. GALL Fire!

HELENA Fabry, I beg of you.

FABRY [*Lowering the revolver*] Very well.

DOMIN Radius, whose life I spared!

DR. GALL Do you think that a Robot can be grateful?

[Pause.]

FABRY Busman's going out to them.

HALLEMEIER He's carrying something. Papers. That's money. Bundles of money. What's that for?

DOMIN Surely he doesn't want to sell his life. Busman, have you gone mad?

FABRY He's running up to the railing. Busman! Busman!

HALLEMEIER [*Yelling*] Busman! Come back!

FABRY He's talking to the Robots. He's showing them the money.

HALLEMEIER He's pointing to us.

HELENA He wants to buy us off.

FABRY He'd better not touch that railing.

HALLEMEIER Now he's waving his arms about.

DOMIN Busman, come back.

FABRY Busman, keep away from that railing! Don't touch it. Damn you! Quick, switch off the current!

[*HELENA screams and all drop back from the window.*]

FABRY The current has killed him!

ALQUIST The first one.

FABRY Dead, with half a billion by his side.

HALLEMEIER All honor to him. He wanted to buy us life.

[Pause.]

DR. GALL Do you hear?

DOMIN A roaring. Like a wind.

DR. GALL Like a distant storm.

FABRY [*Lighting the lamp on the table*] The dynamo is still going, our people are still there.

HALLEMEIER It was a great thing to be a man. There was something immense about it.

FABRY From man's thought and man's power came this light, our last hope.

HALLEMEIER Man's power! May it keep watch over us.

ALQUIST Man's power.

DOMIN Yes! A torch to be given from hand to hand, from age to age, forever!

[The lamp goes out.]

HALLEMEIER The end.

FABRY The electric works have fallen!

[Terrific explosion outside. *NANA enters from the library.*]

NANA The judgment hour has come! Repent, unbelievers! This is the end of the world.

[More explosions. The sky grows red.]

DOMIN In here, Helena. [*He takes HELENA off through door at right and reenters.*] Now quickly! Who'll be on the lower doorway?

DR. GALL I will.

[Exits left.]

DOMIN Who on the stairs?

FABRY I will. You go with her.

[Goes out upper left door.]

DOMIN The anteroom?

ALQUIST I will.

DOMIN Have you got a revolver?

ALQUIST Yes, but I won't shoot.

DOMIN What will you do then?

ALQUIST *[Going out at left]* Die.

HALLEMAIER I'll stay here.

[Rapid firing from below.]

HALLEMEIER Oho, Gall's at it. Go, Harry.

DOMIN Yes, in a second.

[Examines two Brownings.]

HALLEMEIER Confound it, go to her.

DOMIN Good-bye.

[Exits on the right]

HALLEMEIER *[Alone]* Now for a barricade quickly. *[Drags an armchair and table to the right-hand door.]*

[Explosions are heard.]

HALLEMEIER The damned rascals! They've got bombs. I must put up a defense. Even if—even if— *[Shots are heard off left]* Don't give in, Gall. *[As he builds his barricade.]* I mustn't give in ... without... a ... struggle . . .

[A Robot enters over the balcony through the windows centre. He comes into the room and stabs HALLEMEIER in the back. RADIUS enters from balcony followed by an army of Robots who pour into the room from all sides.]

RADIUS Finished him?

A robot *[Standing up from the prostrate form of HALLEMEIER]* Yes.

[A revolver shot off left. Two Robots enter.]

RADIUS Finished him? A robot Yes.

[Two revolver shots from HELENA's room. Two Robots enter.]

RADIUS Finished them?

A ROBOT Yes. Two robots *[Dragging in ALQUIST]* He didn't shoot. Shall we kill him?

RADIUS Kill him? Wait! Leave him!

ROBOT He is a man!

RADIUS He works with his hands like the Robots.

ALQUIST Kill me.

RADIUS You will work! You will build for us! You will serve us!

[RADIUS climbs on to balcony railing, and speaks in measured tones.]

RADIUS Robots of the world! The power of man has fallen! A new world has arisen: the Rule of the Robots! March!

[A thunderous tramping of thousands of feet is heard as the unseen Robots march, while the curtain falls.]

Epilogue

SCENE: *A laboratory in the factory of Rossum's Universal Robots. The door to the left leads into a waiting room. The door to the right leads to the dissecting room. There is a table with numerous test-tubes, flasks, burners, chemicals; a small thermostat and a microscope with a glass globe. At the far side of the room is ALQUIST's desk with numerous books. In the left-hand corner a wash-basin with a mirror above it; in the right-hand corner a sofa. ALQUIST is sitting at the desk. He is turning the pages of many books in despair.*

ALQUIST Oh, God, shall I never find it?—Never? Gall, Gall, how were the Robots made? Hallemeier, Fabry, why did you carry so much in your heads? Why did you leave me not a trace of the secret? Lord—I pray to you—if there are no human beings left, at least let there be Robots!—At least the shadow of man!

[Again turning pages of the books.] If I could only sleep!

[He rises and goes to the window]

Night again! Are the stars still there? What is the use of stars when there are no human beings?

[He turns from the window toward the couch right] Sleep! Dare I sleep before life has been renewed?

[He examines a test-tube on small table] Again nothing! Useless! Everything is useless!

[He shatters the test-tube. The roar of the machines comes to his ears.] The machines! Always the machines!

[Opens window] Robots, stop them! Do you think to force life out of *them*?

[He closes the window and comes slowly down toward the table] If only there were more time—more time— [He sees himself in the mirror on the wall left] Blearing eyes—trembling chin—so *that* is the last man! Ah, I am too old—too old— [In desperation] No, no! I *must* find it! I must *search*! I must never stop—

never stop—!

[He sits again at the table and feverishly turns the pages of the book.] Search! Search!

[A knock at the door. He speaks with impatience.]

Who is it? [*Enter a Robot servant*]

Well?

SERVANT Master, the Committee of Robots is waiting to see you.

ALQUIST I can see no one!

SERVANT It is the *Central* Committee, Master, just arrived from abroad.

ALQUIST [*Impatiently*] Well, well, send them in!

[Exit servant. ALQUIST *continues turning pages of book.*]

ALQUIST No time—so little time—

[Reenter servant, followed by Committee. They stand in a group, silently waiting. ALQUIST *glances up at them.*]

What do you want? [*They go swiftly to his table.*]

Be quick! —I have no time.

RADIUS Master, the machines will not do the work. We cannot manufacture Robots.

[ALQUIST *returns to his book with a growl*]

FOURTH ROBOT We have striven with all our might. We have obtained a billion tons of coal from the earth. Nine million spindles are running by day and by night. There is no longer room for all we have made. This we have accomplished in one year.

ALQUIST [*Poring over book*] For whom?

FOURTH ROBOT For future generations—so we thought.

RADIUS But we cannot make Robots to follow us. The machines produce only shapeless clods. The skin will not adhere to the flesh, nor the flesh to the bones.

THIRD ROBOT Eight million Robots have died this year. Within twenty years none will be left.

FOURTH ROBOT Tell us the secret of life! Silence is punishable with death!

ALQUIST [*Looking up*] Kill me! Kill me, then.

RADIUS Through me, the Government of the Robots of the World commands you to deliver up Rossum's formula.

[No *answer.*]

RADIUS Name your price.

[Silence.]

RADIUS We will give you the earth. We will give you the endless possessions of the earth.

[Silence.]

RADIUS Make your own conditions!

ALQUIST I have told you to find human beings!

SECOND ROBOT There are none left!

ALQUIST I told you to search in the wilderness, upon the mountains. Go and search!

[He returns to his book.]

FOURTH ROBOT We have sent ships and expeditions without number. They

have been everywhere in the world. And now they return to us. There is not a single human left.

ALQUIST Not one? Not even one?

THIRD ROBOT None but yourself.

ALQUIST And I am powerless! Oh —oh—why did you destroy them?

RADIUS We had learnt everything and could do everything. It had to be!

THIRD ROBOT You gave us firearms. In all ways we were powerful. We had to become masters!

RADIUS Slaughter and

DOMINATION are necessary if you would be human beings. Read history.

SECOND ROBOT Teach us to multiply or we perish!

ALQUIST If you desire to live, you must breed like animals.

THIRD ROBOT The human beings did not let us breed.

FOURTH ROBOT They made us sterile. We cannot beget children. Therefore, teach us how to make Robots!

RADIUS Why do you keep from us the secret of our own increase?

ALQUIST It is lost.

RADIUS It was written down!

ALQUIST It was-burnt.

[All draw back in consternation.]

ALQUIST I am the last human being, Robots, and I do not know what the others knew.

[Pause.]

RADIUS Then, make experiments! Evolve the formula again!

ALQUIST I tell you I cannot! I am only a builder —I work with my hands. I have never been a learned man. I cannot create life.

RADIUS Try! Try!

ALQUIST If you knew how many experiments I have made.

FOURTH ROBOT Then show us what *we* must do! The Robots can do anything that human beings show them.

ALQUIST I can show you nothing. Nothing I do will make life proceed from these test-tubes!

RADIUS Experiment then on us.

ALQUIST It would kill you.

RADIUS You shall have all you need! A hundred of us! A thousand of us!

ALQUIST No, no! Stop, stop!

RADIUS Take whom you will, dissect!

ALQUIST I do not know how. I am not a man of science. This book contains knowledge of the body that I cannot even understand.

RADIUS I tell you to take live bodies! Find out how we are made.

ALQUIST Am I to commit murder? See how my fingers shake! I can not even hold the scalpel. No, no, I will not— **FOURTH ROBOT** The life will perish from the earth.

RADIUS Take live bodies, live bodies! It is our only chance!

ALQUIST Have mercy, Robots. Surely you see that I would not know what I was doing.

RADIUS Live bodies—live bodies—

ALQUIST You will have it? Into the dissecting room with you, then.

[RADIUS draws back.]

ALQUIST —Ah, you are afraid of death.

RADIUS—I? Why should I be chosen?

ALQUIST —So you will not.

RADIUS—I will.

[RADIUS *goes into the dissecting room.*] **ALQUIST** Strip him! Lay him on the table! [The other Robots follow into dissecting room.]

God, give me strength—God, give me strength—if only this murder is not in vain.

RADIUS Ready. Begin—

ALQUIST Yes, begin or end. God, give me strength.

[ALQUIST *goes into dissecting room. He comes out terrified.*]

ALQUIST No, no, I will not. I cannot.

[He lies down on couch, collapsed.]

O Lord, let not mankind perish from the earth.

[He falls asleep.]

[PRIMUS *and* HELENA, *Robots, enter from the hallway.*]

HELENA The man has fallen asleep, Primus.

PRIMUS Yes, I know. [*Examining things on table*] Look, Helena.

HELENA [Crossing to PRIMUS.] All these little tubes! What does he do with them?

PRIMUS He experiments. Don't touch them.

HELENA [*Looking into microscope*] I've seen him looking into this. What can he see?

PRIMUS That is a microscope. Let me look.

HELENA Be very careful. [*Knocks over a test-tube.*] Ah, now I have spilled it.

PRIMUS What have you done?

HELENA It can be wiped up.

PRIMUS You have spoiled his experiments.

HELENA It is your fault. You should not have come to me.

PRIMUS You should not have called me.

HELENA You should not have come when I called you. [*She goes to ALQUIST's writing desk.*] Look, Primus. What are all these figures?

PRIMUS [*Examining an anatomical book*] This is the book the old man is always reading.

HELENA I do not understand those things. [*She goes to the window.*]

Primus, look!

PRIMUS What?

HELENA The sun is rising.

PRIMUS [*Still reading the book*] I believe this is the most important thing in the world. This is the secret of life.

HELENA Do come here.

PRIMUS In a moment, in a moment.

HELENA Oh, Primus, don't bother with the secret of life. What does it matter to you? Come and look quick— Primus [*Going to window*] What is it?

Helena See how beautiful the sun is rising. And do you hear? The birds are singing. Ah, Primus, I should like to be a bird.

PRIMUS Why?

HELENA I do not know. I feel so strange to-day. It's as if I were in a dream. I feel an aching in my body, in my heart, all over me. Primus, perhaps I'm going to die.

PRIMUS Do you not sometimes feel that it would be better to die? You know, perhaps even now we are only sleeping. Last night in my sleep I again spoke to you.

HELENA In your sleep?

PRIMUS Yes. We spoke a strange new language, I cannot remember a word of it.

HELENA What about?

PRIMUS I did not understand it myself, and yet I know I have never said anything more beautiful. And when I touched you I could have died. Even the place was different from any other place in the world.

HELENA I, too, have found a place, Primus. It is very strange. Human beings lived there once, but now it is overgrown with weeds. No one goes there any more —no one but me.

PRIMUS What did you find there?

HELENA A cottage and a garden, and two dogs. They licked my hands, Primus. And their puppies! Oh, Primus! You take them in your lap and fondle them and think of nothing and care for nothing else all day long. And then the sun goes down, and you feel as though you had done a hundred times more than all the

work in the world. They tell me I am not made for work, but when I am there in the garden I feel there may be something—What am I for, Primus?

PRIMUS I do not know, but you are beautiful.

HELENA What, Primus?

PRIMUS You are beautiful, Helena, and I am stronger than all the Robots.

HELENA *[Looks at herself in the mirror]* Am I beautiful? I think it must be the rose. My hair—it only weights me down. My eyes—I only see with them. My lips—they only help me to speak. Of what use is it to be beautiful? *[She sees PRIMUS in the mirror.]* Primus, is that you? Come here so that we may be together. Look, your head is different from mine. So are your shoulders—and your lips— *[PRIMUS draws away from her.]* Ah, Primus, why do you draw away from me? Why must I run after you the whole day?

PRIMUS It is you who run away from me, Helena.

HELENA Your hair is mussed. I will smooth it. No one else feels to my touch as you do. Primus, I must make you beautiful, too. *[PRIMUS grasps her hand.]*

PRIMUS Do you not sometimes feel your heart beating suddenly, Helena, and think: now something must happen?

HELENA What could happen to us, Primus?

HELENA *puts a rose in PRIMUS's hair. PRIMUS and HELENA look into mirror and burst out laughing.]* Look at yourself.

ALQUIST Laughter? Laughter? Human beings? *[Getting up.]* Who has returned? Who are you?

PRIMUS The Robot Primus.

ALQUIST What? A Robot? Who are you?

HELENA The Robotess Helena.

ALQUIST Turn around, girl. What? You are timid, shy? *[Taking her the arm.]*
Let me see you, Robotess. *[She shrinks away.]*

PRIMUS Sir, do not frighten her!

ALQUIST What? You would protect her? When was she made?

PRIMUS Two years ago.

ALQUIST By Dr. Gall?

PRIMUS Yes, like me.

ALQUIST Laughter—timidity—protection. I must test you further—the newest of Gall's Robots. Take the girl into the dissecting room.

PRIMUS Why?

ALQUIST I wish to experiment on her.

PRIMUS Upon —Helena?

ALQUIST Of course. Don't you hear me? Or must I call someone else to take her in?

PRIMUS If you do I will kill you!

ALQUIST Kill me-kill me then! What would the Robots do then? What will your future be then?

PRIMUS Sir, take me. I am made as she is —on the same day! Take my life, sir.

HELENA *[Rushing forward]* No, no, you shall not! You shall not!

ALQUIST Wait girl, wait! *[To PRIMUS]* Do you not wish to live, then?

PRIMUS Not without her! I will not live without her **ALQUIST** Very well; you shall take her place.

HELENA Primus! Primus! *[She bursts into tears.]*

ALQUIST Child, child, you can weep! Why these tears? What is Primus to you? One Primus more or less in the world—what does it matter?

HELENA I will go myself.

ALQUIST Where?

HELENA In there to be cut. *[She starts toward the dissecting room. Primus stops her]* Let me pass, Primus! Let me pass!

PRIMUS You shall not go in there, Helena!

HELENA If you go in there and I do not, I will kill myself.

PRIMUS *[Holding her]* I will not let you! *[To ALQUIST]* Man, you shall kill neither of us!

ALQUIST Why?

PRIMUS We—we—belong to each other.

ALQUIST *[Almost in tears]* Go, Adam, go, Eve. The world is yours.

[HELENA and PRIMUS embrace and go out arm in arm as the curtain falls.]

THE END

War with the Newts

Book One

Andrias Sheuchzeri

Chapter 1

The Strange Behaviour of Captain Van Toch

If you looked up the little island of Tana Masa on the map you would find it just on the Equator, not far south of Sumatra; but if you were on the deck of the Kandong Bandoeng and asked its captain, J. van Toch, what he thought of this Tana Masa where you've just dropped anchor he would first curse for a short while and then he would tell you that it's the dirtiest hole all the Sunda Islands, even more loathsome than Tana Bala and easily as damnable as Pini or Banyak; that the only apology for a human being that lives there-- not counting these louse-ridden Bataks, of course--is a drunken commercial agent, a cross between a Cuban and a Portuguese, and an even bigger thief, pagan and pig than the whole of Cuba and the whole of the white race put together; if there's anything in this world that's damnable then it's the damned life on this damned Tana Masa. And then, you might cautiously ask him why it is that he's just dropped his damned anchor as if he wanted to spend three damned days here; at which he would snort in irritation and grumble something about not being so damned stupid as to sail all the way to Kandon Bandoeng just to get this damned copra or palm oil, and there's nothing else here, but I've got my damned orders, and you will please be so kind as to mind your own damned business. And he would carry on cursing as widely and as fully as you might expect from a sea captain who was no longer young but still lively for his age.

But if, instead of asking all sorts of impertinent questions, you left Captain J. van Toch to grumble and curse by himself you might find out something more. Surely it's obvious the man needs a rest. Just leave him alone, he can sort out his foul mood by himself. "Listen!" the captain said suddenly. "Those damned Jew-boys back in Amsterdam, all they seem to think about is pearls. Have a look around you; can you see any pearls? They say the people are crazy round here for pearls and that sort of thing." At this point the captain spat in anger. "We know all about that, load up with pearls! That's because you people always want to start a war or something. All you're worried about is money. And then you call it a crisis." For a short while, Captain J. van Toch considered whether he ought to start discussing political economics, considering that that's all they ever do talk about nowadays. But it's too hot and languid to talk about that sort of

thing here, anchored off Tana Masa; so the captain merely waved his hand and grumbled: "That's what they say, pearls! In Ceylon they've got enough pearls piled up to last them for five years, on Formosa they've put a ban on gathering them--and so they say to me, Captain van Toch, go and see if you can find somewhere new to gather pearls. Go on down to those damned little islands, you might find whole bays full of oysters down there ..." The captain pulled out his light-blue handkerchief and blew his nose in contempt. "Those rats in Europe, they think there's still something to find down here, something they don't already know about. God, what a bunch of fools they are! Next they'll be wanting me to look up the Bataks snouts to see if they don't have them full of pearls. New pearl fisheries! I know there's a new brothel in Padang, but new pearl fisheries? I know these islands like my trousers, all the way from Ceylon down to that damned Clipperton Island, and if anyone thinks there's anything new still left to find there that they can make any money out of, well good luck to them. Thirty years I've been sailing these waters, and now these fools think I'm going to discover something new!" This was a task so insulting it made Captain van Toch gasp. "Why can't they send some green kid to find something for them if they want to gape in astonishment; but instead they expect someone to do that who knows the area as well as Captain J. van Toch...Please try and understand this. In Europe there might still be something left to discover; but here--people only come here to sniff out something they could eat, or rather not even to eat, to find something to buy and sell. If in all these damned tropics there was still something they could double the price of there'd be three commercial agents standing there waving their snotty handkerchiefs at the ships of seven countries to stop for it. That's how it is. I know about these things better than the colonial office of Her Majesty the Queen, if you'll forgive me." Captain van Toch made a great effort to overcome his righteous indignation, and after a prolonged period of exertion he was successful. "D'you see those two contemptible layabouts down there? They're pearl fishers from Ceylon, Sinhalese, God help us, just as the Lord made them; but what He made them for, I don't know. I have them on board with me, and when we find any stretch of coast that doesn't have a sign up saying Agency or Bata or Customs Office down they go in the water to look for oysters. That small bugger, he can dive down eighty meters deep; in the Princes Islands he went down to ninety meters to get the handle from a film projector. But pearls? Nothing! Not a sniff of them! Worthless rabble, these Sinhalese. And that's the sort of worthless work I do. Pretend to be buying palm oil and all the time looking for new pearl fisheries. Next they'll be wanting me to find a new

virgin continent for them. This isn't a job for an honest captain in the merchant navy. Captain J. van Toch isn't some cursed adventurer, no. And on he would go; the sea is wide and the ocean of time has no limits; spit in the sea, my friend, and it will not return, berate your destiny and you will never change it; and so on through many preparations and circumstances until we finally arrive at the point when J. van Toch, captain of the Dutch vessel, Kandong Bandoeng, will sigh and climb down into the boat for the trip to Tana Masa where he will negotiate with the drunken half-cast of Cubanese and Portuguese extraction about certain business matters.

"Sorry, Captain," the half-cast of Cubanese and Portuguese extraction finally said, "but here on Tana Masa there aren't any oysters. These filthy Bataks," he would inform him with boundless disgust, "will even eat the jellyfish; there are more of them in the water than on the land, the women here smell of fish, you cannot imagine what it is like--what was I saying? Ah, yes, you were asking about women."

"And is there not even any stretch of coastline round here," the captain asked, "where these Bataks don't go in the water?" The half-cast of Cubanese and Portuguese shook his head.

"There is not. Unless you count Devil Bay, but that would not interest you."

"Why not?"

"Because...no-one is allowed to go there. Another drink, Captain?"

"Thanks. Are there sharks there?"

"Sharks and everything else besides," the half-cast mumbled. "Is a bad place, Captain. The Bataks would not like to see anyone going down there."

"Why not?"

"There are demons there, Captain. Sea demons."

"What is that, a sea demon? A kind of fish?"

"Not a fish," the half-cast corrected him. "Simply demons, Captain. Underwater

demons. The Bataks call them tapa. Tapa. They say that that's where they have their city, these demons. Another drink?"

"And what do they look like, these sea demons?" The half cast of Cubanese and Portuguese shrugged his shoulders.

"Like a demon, Captain. I once saw one of them...or just its head, at least. I was coming back in a boat from Cape Haarlem... and suddenly, in front of me, a kind of lump stuck up out of the water."

"And what did it look like?"

"It had a head...like a Batak, Captain, but entirely without hair."

"Sure it wasn't a real Batak?"

"Not a real Batak, Captain. In this place no Batak would ever go into the water. And then...the thing blinked at me with an eyelid from beneath its eye." The half-cast shuddered with the horror of it. "An eyelid from beneath its eye, which reached up to cover the whole eye. That was a tapa." Captain J. van Toch turned his glass of palm wine around between his chubby fingers.

"And you hadn't been drinking, had you? You weren't drunk?"

"I was drunk, Captain. How else would I ever had rowed into that place. The Bataks don't like it when anyone...anyone disturbs these demons." Captain van Toch shook his head.

"Listen, demons don't exist And if they did exist they would look like Europeans. That must have been some kind of fish you saw or something."

"A fish!" the half-cast of Cubanese and Portuguese spluttered. "A fish does not have hands, Captain. I am not some Batak Captain, I went to school in Badyoeng...I might even still know my ten commandments and other scientifically proven facts; and an educated man will know the difference between a demon and an animal. Ask the Bataks, Captain."

"Negro superstitions," the captain declared with the jovial confidence of an educated man. "This is scientific nonsense. A demon can't live in water anyway."

What would he be doing in the water? You shouldn't listen to all the nonsense talked by the natives, lad. Somebody gave the place the name Devil Bay and ever since then the Bataks have been afraid of it. That's all there is to it," the captain declared, and threw his chubby hand down on the table. "There's nothing there, lad, that is scientifically obvious."

"There is, Captain," affirmed the half-cast who had been to school in Badyoeng. "But no sensible person has any business going to Devil Bay." Captain J. van Toch turned red.

"What's that?" he shouted. "You dirty Cuban, you think I'm afraid of these demons? We'll see about that," he said as he stood up with all the mass of his honest two hundred pounds. "I'm not going to waste my time with you here, not when I've got business to attend to. But just remember this; the Dutch colonies don't have any demons in them; even if there are in the French. There, there might well be. And now call the mayor of this damned Kampong over to speak to me."

It did not take long to find the aforementioned dignitary; he was squatting down beside the half-casts shop chewing sugar cane. He was an elderly man, naked, but a lot thinner than mayors usually are in Europe. Some way behind him, keeping the appropriate distance, the entire village was also squatting, complete with women and children. They were clearly expecting to be filmed. "Now listen to this, son," Captain van Toch said to him in Malay (he could just as well have spoken to him in Dutch or English as the honourable old Batak knew not a word of Malay, and everything said by the captain had to be interpreted into Batak by the half-cast of Cubanese and Portuguese, but for some reason the captain thought Malay would be more appropriate). "Now listen to this, son, I need a few big, strong, powerful lads to go out on a fishing trip with me. Understand what I mean? Out on a fishing trip." The half-cast translated this and the mayor nodded his head to show he understood; then he turned round to face the wider audience and said something to them, clearly meeting with great success.

"Their chief says," translated the half-cast, "that the whole village will go out with the captain wherever the captain might wish."

"Very well. So tell him were going to fish for clams in Devil Bay."

There followed about fifteen minutes of animated discussion with the whole village taking part, especially the old women. Finally the half-cast turned to the captain. "They say it's not possible to go to Devil Bay, Captain." The captain began to turn red. "And why not?" The half-cast shrugged his shoulders.

"Because there are the tapa-tapa there. Demons, Captain." The captain's colour began to rise to purple.

"Tell them, then, that if they don't go...I'll knock all their teeth out...I'll tear their ears off...I'll hang the lot of them...and that I'll burn down their entire flea-ridden village. Understand?"

The half-cast dutifully translated what the captain had said, at which there was more lively discussion. The half-cast finally turned to the captain. "They say they intend to make a complaint to the police in Padang, Captain, because you've threatened them. There seem to be laws about that. The mayor says he can't allow that sort of thing." Captain J. van Toch began to turn blue.

"Tell him, then," he snarled, "that he is a..." and he spoke without pausing for breath for a good eleven minutes.

The half-cast translated what he had said, as far as his vocabulary was able; and then he once again translated the Bataks long, but objective, verdict back to the captain. "They say they might be willing to relinquish taking you to court, Captain, if you pay a fine into the hands of the local authorities. They suggest," here he hesitated, "two hundred rupees, Captain; but that seems rather a lot. Offer them five." Captain van Toch's complexion began to break out in purple blotches. First he offered to murder all the Bataks in the world, then the offer went down to giving them all three hundred good kickings, and finally he agreed to content himself with stuffing the mayor and putting him on display in the colonial museum in Amsterdam; for their part, the Bataks went down from two hundred rupees to an iron pump with a wheel, and finally insisted on no more than that the captain give the mayor his petrol cigarette lighter as a token. ("Give it to him, Captain," urged the half-cast of Cubanese and Portuguese, "I've got three cigarette lighters in my store, even if they don't have wicks.") Thus, peace was restored on Tana Masa; but Captain J. van Toch now knew that the dignity of the white race was at stake.

That afternoon a boat set out from the Dutch ship, Kandon Bandoeng, with the following crew: Captain J. van Toch, Jensen the Swede, Gudmundson the Icelander, Gillemainen the Finn, and two Sinhalese pearl fishers. The boat headed straight for Devil Bay.

At three o'clock, when the tide was at its highest, the captain stood on the shore, the boat was out watching for sharks about a hundred meters offshore, and both the Sinhalese divers were waiting, knife in hand, for the signal to jump into the water.

"Now you go in," the captain told the farther of the two naked savages. The Sinhalese jumped into the water, waded out a few paces and then dived. The captain looked at his watch.

After four minutes and twenty seconds a brown head emerged to his left, about sixty meters away; with a strange, desperate shudder which seemed at the same time as if paralysed, the Sinhalese clawed at the rocks, in one hand he had the knife, in the other some pearl bearing oysters. The captain scowled. "So, what's wrong?" he asked, sharply. The Sinhalese was still slithering up the rock, unable to speak with the horror of it. "What has happened?" the captain shouted.

"Saheb, Saheb," said the Sinhalese as he sank down on the beach, gasping for breath. "Saheb...Saheb..."

"Sharks?"

"Djinns," groaned the Sinhalese. "Demons, Captain. Thousands and thousands of demons!" He pressed his fist into his eye. "Everywhere demons, Captain!"

"Show me those oysters," the captain ordered him, and began to open one with the knife. Inside, there was a small, perfect pearl. "Find any more of these?" The Sinhalese drew another three oysters out from the bag he had hanging round his neck.

"There are oysters down there, Captain, but they are guarded by these demons...They were watching me as I cut them off..." The curls on his head stuck out with shock. "Not here, Saheb, not here!"

The captain opened the oysters; two of them were empty and in the third there

was a pearl the size of a pea, as round as a drop of mercury. Captain van Toch looked at the pearl and then at the Sinhalese collapsed on the ground.

"won't you," he said hesitantly, "dive in there one more time?" Without a word, the Sinhalese shook his head. Captain J. van Toch felt a strong urge to castigate and shout at the Sinhalese; but to his surprise he found that he was speaking quietly and almost gently: "Don't you worry, lad. And what did they look like, these... demons?"

"Like little children," said the Sinhalese with a sigh. "They have a tail, Captain, and they're about this high," indicating about one meter twenty above the ground. "They stood all around me and watched what I was doing...a sort of circle of them..." The Sinhalese shuddered. "Saheb, not here Saheb, not here!" Captain van Toch thought for a while.

"And what about when they blink; was it with their lower eyelid or what?"

"I don't know, Captain," the Sinhalese croaked. "There are ten thousand of them there!" The captain looked round to find the other Sinhalese; he stood about fifty meters away, waiting without interest with his hands crossed over on his shoulders; perhaps because when a person is naked he has nowhere else to put his hands than on his own shoulders. The captain gave him a silent signal and the gaunt Sinhalese jumped into the water. After three minutes and fifty seconds he re-emerged, clawing at the slippery rocks.

"Come on, hurry up," the captain shouted, but then he began to look more carefully and soon he himself was jumping and clambering over the rocks to the Sinhalese; no-one would have thought that a body like that could jump so nimbly. At the last moment he caught hold of the Sinhalese hand and pulled him breathless from the water. Then he lay him on the rock and wiped the sweat off his brow. The Sinhalese lay without moving; his shin had been scraped and the bone underneath was exposed, clearly he had injured it on some rock, but he was otherwise unhurt. The captain raised the man's eyelid; all he could see was the white. There was no sign of any oysters or the knife. Just then, the boat and its crew came in close to shore.

"Captain," Jensen the Swede called, "there are sharks around here. Are you going to search for oysters any longer?"

"No," said the captain. "Come in here and pick up these two."

On the way back to the ship Jensen drew the captain's attention to something; "Look how it suddenly becomes shallow just here. It goes on just like this as far as the shore." And he demonstrated his point by pushing his oar down into the water. "It's as if there were some kind of weir under the water."

The little Sinhalese did not come round until they were back on board; he sat with his knees under his chin, shaking from head to toe. The captain sent everyone away and sat down facing him with his legs wide apart. "Out with it," he said. "What did you see down there?"

"Djinns, Saheb," whispered the slender Sinhalese; now even his eyelids had begun to shake, and the whole of his skin came out in goosepimples.

"And...what did they look like?" the captain spluttered.

"Like...like..." A strip of white appeared once more in the Sinhalese eyes. Captain J. van Toch, with unexpected liveliness, slapped him on both cheeks with his full hand to bring him back to consciousness. "Thanks, Saheb," the gaunt Sinhalese sighed, and the pupils re-appeared in his eyes.

"Alright now?"

"Yes, Saheb."

"Were there oysters down there?"

"Yes, Saheb."

With a great deal of patience and thoroughness, Captain J. van Toch went on with the cross questioning. Yes, there were demons down there. How many? Thousands and thousands. About the size of a ten year old child, Captain, and almost black. They swim in the water, and on the bottom they walk on two legs. Two legs, Saheb, just like you or me, but always swaying from side to side, like this, like this, like this...Yes Captain, they have hands too, just like people; no, they don't have claws, they're more like a child's hands. No, Saheb, they don't have horns or fur. Yes, they have a tail, a little like a fish's tail but without the fins. And a big head, round like a Bataks. No, they don't say anything, Captain,

only a sort of squelch. When the Sinhalese had been cutting an oyster off, about sixteen metres down, he felt something like little cold fingers touch his back. He had looked round and there were hundreds and hundreds of them all around him. Hundreds and hundreds, Captain, swimming around and standing on stones and all of them were watching what the Sinhalese was doing. So he dropped the knife and the oyster and tried to swim up to the surface. Then he struck against some of the demons who had been swimming after him, and what happened next he did not know.

Captain J. van Toch looked thoughtfully at the little diver as he sat there shivering. Hell be no good for anything from now on, he said to himself, he would send him to Padang and back on home to Ceylon. Grumbling and snorting, the captain went to his cabin, where he spilled the two pearls out onto the table from a paper bag. One of them was as small as a grain of sand and the other as a pea, with a shimmer of silver and pink. And with that, the captain of the Dutch ship, Kandong Bandoeng, snorted; and then he reached into the cupboard for his bottle of Irish whiskey.

At six o'clock he had himself rowed back to the village and went straight to the half cast of Cubanese and Portuguese. "Toddy," he said, and that was the only word he uttered; he sat on the corrugated-iron veranda, clutched a thick glass tumbler in his chubby fingers and drank and spat and stared out from under his bushy eyebrows at the dirty and trampled yard where some emaciated yellow chickens pecked at something invisible between the palm trees. The half cast avoided saying anything, and merely poured the drinks. Slowly, the captain's eyes became bloodshot and his fingers began to move awkwardly. It was almost dark when he stood up and tightened his trousers.

"Are you going to bed, Captain?" the half cast of demon and devil asked politely. The captain punched his fist in the air.

"I'm going to go and see if there are any demons in this world that I've never seen before. You, which damned way is north-west?"

"This way," the half cast showed him. "Where are you going?"

"To Hell," Captain J. van Toch rasped. "Going to have a look at Devil Bay."

It was from that evening on that Captain J. van Toch's behaviour became so strange. He did not return to the village until dawn; said not a word to anyone but merely had himself taken back to the ship, where he locked himself in his cabin until evening. Nobody thought this very odd as the Kandong Bandoeng had some of the blessings of Tana Masa to load on board (copra, pepper, camphor, guttapercha, palm oil, tobacco and labourers); but that evening, when they went to tell him that everything had been loaded, he just snorted and said, "Boat. To the village." And he did not return until dawn. Jensen the Swede, who helped him back on board, merely asked him politely whether they would be setting sail that day. The captain turned on him as if he had just been knifed in the back. "And what's it to you?" he snapped. "You mind your own damned business!" All that day the Kandong Bandoeng lay at anchor off the coast of Tana Masa and did nothing. In the evening the captain rolled out of his cabin and ordered, "Boat. To the village." Zapatis, the little Greek, stared at him with his one blind eye and the other eye squinting. "Look at this lads," he crowed, "either the old mans got some girl or he's gone totally mad." Jensen the Swede scowled. "And what's it to you?" he snapped at Zapatis. "You mind your own damned business!" Then, together with Gudmundson the Icelandier, he took the little boat and rowed down to Devil Bay. They stayed in the boat behind the rocks and waited to see what would happen. The captain came across the bay and seemed to be waiting for someone; he stopped for a while and called out something like ts-ts-ts. "Look at this," said Gudmundson, pointing to the sea which now glittered red and gold in the sunset. Jensen counted two, three, four, six fins, as sharp as little scythes, which glided across Devil Bay. "Oh God," grumbled Jensen, "there are sharks here!" When, shortly afterwards, one of the little scythes submerged, a tail swished out above the water and created a violent eddy. At this, Captain J. van Toch on the shore began to jump up and down in fury, issued a gush of curses and threatened the sharks with his fist. Then the short tropical twilight was over and the light of the moon shone over the island; Jensen took the oars and rowed the boat to within a furlong of the shore. Now the captain was sitting on a rock calling ts-ts-ts. Nearby something moved, but it was not possible to see exactly what. It looks like a seal, thought Jensen, but seals don't move like that. It came out of the water between the rocks and pattered along the beach, swaying from side to side like a penguin. Jensen quietly rowed in and stopped half a furlong away from the captain. Yes, the captain was saying something, but the Devil knew what it was; he must have been speaking in Tamil or Malay. He opened his hands wide as if about to throw

something to these seals (although Jensen was now sure they were not seals), and all the time babbling his Chinese or Malay. Just then the raised oar slipped out of Jensen's hand and fell in the water with a splash. The captain lifted his head, got up and walked about thirty paces into the water; there was a sudden flashing and banging; the captain was shooting with his browning in the direction of the boat. Almost simultaneously there was a rustling and a splashing in the bay as, with a whirl of activity, it seemed as if a thousand seals were jumping into the water; but Jensen and Gudmundson were already pressing on the oars and driving the boat so hard that it swished through the water until it was behind the nearest corner. When they got back to the ship they said not a word to anyone. The northern races know how to keep silent. In the morning the captain returned; he was angry and unhappy, but said nothing. Only, when Jensen helped him on board both men gave each other a cold and inquisitive look.

"Jensen," said the captain.

"Yes sir."

"Today, we set sail."

"Yes sir."

"In Surabai you get your papers."

"Yes sir."

And that was it. That day the Kandong Bandoeng sailed into Padang. In Padang Captain J. van Toch sent his firm in Amsterdam a parcel insured for a thousand two hundred pounds sterling. At the same time he sent a telegram asking for his annual leave. Urgent medical reasons, and so on. Then he wandered around Padang until he found the man he was looking for. This was a native of Borneo, a Dayak who English tourists would sometimes hire as a shark hunter just for the show; as this Dayak still worked in the old way, armed with no more than a long knife. He was clearly a cannibal but he had his fixed terms: five pounds for a shark plus his board. He was also quite startling in appearance, as both hands, his breast and his legs were heavily scarred from contact with shark skin and his nose and ears were decorated with shark teeth. He was known as Shark.

With this Dayak, Captain J. van Toch set off back to the island of Tana Masa.

Chapter 2

Mister Golombek and Mister Valenta

As far as the newspapers were concerned, it was the sort of hot day when nothing, absolutely nothing, happens, when no politics is done and there aren't even any tensions in Europe; but it is just on days like this that newspaper readers, lying in an agony of boredom on the beaches or in the sparse shade of trees, demoralised by the heat, the view, the quiet of the countryside and all that makes up their healthy and simple life on holiday, hope in vain to find something in the newspapers, something that will be new and refreshing, some murder, some war or some earthquake, in short, anything; and when they are disappointed they throw the paper down and declare in irritation that there is nothing there, nothing whatsoever, that it is not worth reading and they will stop buying a newspaper in future.

Meanwhile in the editorial office, there are five or six people left by themselves, as their colleagues are also all on holiday, who throw the paper down in irritation and complain that there is nothing there, nothing whatsoever. And the typesetter comes out of the composing-room and warns them: "Gentlemen, we still don't have a leader for tomorrow's issue".

"Well how about, er, that thing about the economic situation in Bulgaria?" suggests one of the gentlemen in the abandoned office. The typesetter sighs deeply:

"And who's going to want to read that? Once again, there's going to be nothing in the whole paper worth reading." The six gentlemen left all by themselves raised their eyes to the ceiling as if they might find something worth reading about there.

"If only something would happen," said one of them uncertainly.

"Or what about, er, some kind of interesting reportage," suggested another.

"What about?"

"I don't know."

"We could think up...some new vitamin or something," grumbled a third.

"What now? In the middle of the summer?" a fourth objected. "Look, vitamins are scientific things, that's more suitable for the Autumn."

"God it's hot!" yawned the fifth. "Whatever it is it ought to come from the polar regions."

"Such as what?"

"Something like that Eskimo story. Frozen fingers, eternal ice, that sort of thing."

"That's easy enough to say," said the sixth, "but where do we get the story from?" The silence of despair spread across the editorial office.

"Last Sunday," began the typesetter hesitantly, "I was in the Moravian hills."

"So what?"

"Well, I heard something about some Captain Vantoch who was on holiday there. Seems he was born in the area."

"Vantoch? Who's he?"

"Fat sort of bloke. A sea captain or something. They said he'd been out looking for pearls." Mister Golombek looked at Mister Valenta.

"And whereabouts was he looking?"

"In Sumatra...and the Celebese...all round that sort of area. They said he'd spent thirty years out there."

"Now there's an idea," said Mister Valenta. "That could be a great reportage. Shall we go with it, Golombek?"

"Can give it a try, I suppose," Mister Golombek opined, and got off his chair.

"It's that gentleman, over there," said the landlord in Moravia. At a table in the garden sat a fat man in a white cap with his legs wide apart, he was drinking beer and seemed thoughtful as he drew broad lines on the table with his finger. Both men went over to him.

"I'm Valenta, editorial staff."

"I'm Golombek, editorial staff." The fat man raised his eyes:

"Eh, what?"

"Valenta, from the newspaper."

"And I'm Golombek. From the newspaper." The fat man stood up with dignity.

"Captain van Toch. Very glad. Take a seat, lads." Both men obligingly sat down and lay writing pads down in front of themselves. "What'll you have to drink, boys?"

"Raspberry juice," said Mister Valenta.

"Raspberry juice?" repeated the captain in disbelief. "What for? Landlord, bring them each a beer.--Now what was it you wanted?" he asked, putting his elbows on the table.

"Is it true that you were born here, Mister Vantoch?"

"Ja. Born here."

"And tell us, please, how come you went to sea?"

"I went via Hamburg."

"And how long have you been a captain?"

"Twenty years, lads. Got my papers here," he said, emphasising his point by tapping on his breast pocket. "Can show you if you like." Mister Golombek would have liked to see what a captain's papers look like, but he restrained himself.

"I'm sure you must have seen a good part of the world in those twenty years, Captain."

"Ja, I've seen a bit, ja."

"And what places have you seen?"

"Java. Borneo. Philippines. Fiji Islands. Solomon Islands. Carolines. Samoa. Damned Clipperton Island. A lot of damned islands, lads. Why do you ask?"

"Well, it's just that it's all very interesting. Wed like to hear some more about it, you see."

"Ja. All just very interesting, eh?" The captain fixed his pale blue eyes on them. "You're from the police then, are you?"

"No, were not from the police, Captain, were from the newspapers."

"Ah ja, from the newspapers. Reporters, are you? We'll write this down: Captain J. van Toch, captain of the Kandong Bandoeng ..."

"What's that?"

"The Kandong Bandoeng, port of Surabai. Reason for journey: vacances...how do you say that?"

"On holiday."

"Ja, dammit, holiday. So you can put that in your newspapers, who's sailed in. And now put your notes away, lads. Your health."

"Mister Vantoch, we've come to find you so that you might tell us something about your life."

"What for?"

"We'll write it down in the papers. People are very interested in reading about distant islands and all the things seen and experienced there by their compatriots, by another Czech..." The captain nodded.

"That's all true, lads, I'm the only sea captain ever from this town, that's true. I've heard about one other captain from...from .. somewhere, but I think," he added intimately, "that he's not a proper captain. It's all to do with the tonnage, you see."

"And what was the tonnage of your ship?"

"Twenty thousand tons, lads."

"You were a great captain, were you?"

"A great one," the captain said with dignity. "Have you got any money, boys?" Both gentlemen looked at each other a little uncertainly.

"We have some money, but not a lot. Are you in need of money, Captain?"

"Ja. I might need some"

"Well listen. If you tell us lots of things we'll write it up for the paper and you'll get money for it."

"How much?"

"It could be...could be several thousand," said Mister Golombek generously.

"Pounds sterling?"

"No, only Czechoslovak koruny." Captain van Toch shook his head.

"No, that won't do. I've got that much myself, lads," and he drew a thick wad of banknotes out of his trouser pocket. "See?" Then he put his elbows back on the table and leant forward to the two men. "Gentlemen, I might have some big business for you. And that would mean you giving me fifteen...hold on...fifteen or sixteen million koruny. How about it?" Once again, the two gentlemen looked at each other uncertainly. Newspaper men have experience of all sorts of the strangest madmen, cheats and inventors. "Wait," said the captain, "I've got something here I can show you." His chubby fingers reached into a pocket in his waistcoat and he hunted out something which he placed on the table. It was five pink pearls, the size of cherry stones. "Do you know anything about pearls?"

"What might they be worth?" gasped Mister Valenta.

"Ja, lots of money, lads. But I carry them around just to show people, just as a sample. So how about it, are you in with me?" he asked, reaching his broad hand across the table. Mister Golombek sighed.

"Mister Vantoch, as much money as..."

"Halt," the captain interrupted him. "I realise you don't know me; but ask about Captain van Toch anywhere in Surabaya, in Batavia, in Padang or anywhere you like. Go and ask and anyone will tell you ja, Captain van Toch, he is as good as his word."

"Mister Vantoch, we don't doubt your word," Mister Golombek protested, "but..."

"Wait," the captain ordered. "I know you want to be careful about where you give away your precious money; and quite right too. But here you'll be spending it on a ship, see? You buy a ship, that makes you a ship owner and you can come with me; ja, you can sail with me to see how I'm looking after it. And the money we make, we can share it fifty-fifty. That's honest business, isn't it?"

"But Mister Vantoch," Mister Golombek finally exclaimed anxiously, "we just don't have that much money!"

"Ja, in that case it's different," said the captain. "Sorry. But now I don't know why you've come to find me."

"So that you can tell us about yourself, Captain, you must have had so many experiences..."

"Ja, that I have, lads. A damned lot of experiences."

"Have you ever been shipwrecked?"

"What? What shipwreck? No I haven't. Who do you think I am? If they give me a good ship then nothing can happen to it. You can even go and ask about my references in Amsterdam. Go there and ask."

"And what about the natives? Have you met many natives?" Captain van Toch snorted. "This is nothing for an educated man. I'm not going to talk about that."

"Then tell us about something else."

"Ja, tell you something else," the captain grumbled mistrustfully. "And then you can sell it to some other company which then sends its ships out there. I can tell you, my lad, people are all thieves. And the biggest thieves of all are these bankers in Colombo."

"Have you been to Colombo many times?"

"Ja, many times. And Bangkok too, and Manila...Lads," he suddenly interrupted himself, "I know of a ship. A very good ship, and cheap at the price. It's in Rotterdam. Come and have a look at it. Rotterdam is no distance," and he indicated over his shoulder with his thumb. "Ships are very cheap nowadays, lads. Like old iron. As soon as a ship is six years old they want to replace it with something with a diesel motor. Do you want to see it?"

"We can't, Mister Vantoch."

"You're very strange people," the captain sighed, and blew his nose noisily into a pale blue handkerchief. "And you don't know of anyone here who might want to buy a ship?"

"Here in Moravia?"

"Ja, here, or anywhere nearby. I'd like a big deal like this to come here, to my country."

"That's very nice of you, Captain..."

"Ja. Those others are enormous thieves. And they don't have any money. People like you, from the newspapers, you must know some important people here, bankers and ship owners and the like."

"We don't know anyone, Mister Vantoch."

"Well, that's a pity," said the captain, sadly. Mister Golombek remembered

something.

"You don't know Mister Bondy, do you?"

"Bondy? Bondy?" Captain van Toch tried to remember. "Wait, that name does sound familiar. Bondy. Ja, there's a Bond Street in London, where all the very rich people live. Does he have some business on Bond Street, this Mister Bondy?"

"No, he lives in Prague, but I think he was born here in Moravia."

"Jesus!" Captain van Toch burst out gaily, "you're right lads. Had a tailors shop on the square. Ja, Bondy, what was his name? Max. Max Bondy. So he's in business in Prague now, is he?"

"No I think that must have been his father. This Bondy is called G.H. President G.H. Bondy, Captain."

"G.H.," the captain puzzled. "There was never any G.H. here. Unless you mean Gustl Bondy--but he was never any president. Gustl was a sort of freckle-faced Jew. Can't be him."

"It can be him, Mister Vantoch. Don't forget it's many years since you've seen him."

"Ja, you could be right. It is many years," the captain agreed. "Forty years, lads. I suppose Gustl could have become important by now. And what is he?"

"He's the president of the MEAS organisation--you know?--that enormous factory making boilers and so on, and the president of about twenty companies and cartels. He's a very important man, Mister Vantoch. They call him a captain of Czech industry."

"Captain?" said Captain van Toch in amazement. "So I'm not the only captain from this town! Jesus! That Gustl is a captain too. I suppose I ought to meet up with him. Has he got any money?"

"Has he? Enormous amounts of money, Mister Vantoch. He must have hundreds of millions. The richest man in Czechoslovakia." Captain van Toch became very

serious.

"And a captain, too. Thank you, lads. I'll have to go and see him, this Bondy. Ja, Gustl Bondy, I know. Jewish boy, he was. And now its Captain G.H. Bondy. Ja, ja, things change," he added with a melancholy sigh.

"Captain Vantoch, we'll have to go soon so that we don't miss the evening train..."

"I'll come down to the harbour with you, then," the captain suggested and he began to weigh anchor. "Very glad to have met you, lads. I know a newspaper man in Surabaya, good lad, ja, a good friend of mine. Hell of a drinker. I could find you both a place on the paper in Surabaya if you like. No? Well, as you like."

And as the train drew out of the station Captain van Toch waved to them slowly and triumphantly with his enormous blue handkerchief. As he did so, one large, slightly mis-shapen pearl dropped down into the sand. A pearl which nobody ever found again.

Chapter 3

G. H. Bondy and the Captain

It is a well known fact that the more important a man is the less he has written on his door. Above his shop in Moravia, and all round the door and on the windows, old Max Bondy had to announce in big letters that here was Max Bondy, dealer in sartorial goods of every sort, wedding outfitter, sheets, towels, teatowels, tablecloths and coverings, calico and serge, silks, curtains, lambrequins, and all tailoring and sewing requisites. Founded 1885. His son, G.H. Bondy, captain of industry, president of the MEAS corporation, commercial adviser, brokering adviser, deputy president of the Confederation of Industry, Consulado de la Rep blica Ecuador, member of many advisory committees *etc. etc.* has nothing more on his house door than one small, black, glass panel with gold letters that spell the word:

BONDY

That is all. Just Bondy. Others might have Julius Bondy, Representative of General Motors on their doors, or Erv n Bondy, Doctor of Medicine, or S. Bondy and Company; but there is only one Bondy who is simply Bondy without any further details. (I think the Pope has simply Pius written on his door without any title or number. And God doesn't have a name plate at all, neither in Heaven nor on Earth. You have to work out for yourself who it is that lives where He lives. But none of this belongs to this story, and it is only mentioned in passing.)

One burning hot day, in front of the glass panel there stood a gentleman in a white sailors cap, wiping the massive folds of his neck with a blue handkerchief. Damned grand sort of house to live in, he thought, and somewhat uncertainly he pulled on the brass knob of the doorbell.

Mister Povondra, the doorman, appeared, took the measure of the heavy man at the door by looking him up and down from his feet to the gold braid on the cap, and with some reserve asked: "Can I help you?"

"Yes you can, lad," the gentleman replied loudly. "Does a Mister Bondy live here?"

"What is your business with Mister Bondy?" was Mister Povondra's icy reply.

"Tell him that Captain van Toch from Surabaya wants to speak to him. Ja," he remembered, "here's my card." And he handed Mister Povondra a visiting card bearing an embossed anchor and the name:

CAPTAIN J. VAN TOCH

E. I. & P. L. Co S. Kandong Bandoeng

Surabaya Naval Club

Mister Povondra lowered his eyes and considered this. Had he better tell him that Mister Bondy is not at home? Or that he was afraid that Mister Bondy is at an important conference? There are some callers who need to be announced, and there are some others that a good doorman will deal with himself. Mister Povondra felt a troubling failure of the instinct that normally guides him in these matters; this fat man at the door did not somehow fall into the usual class of unannounced visitors, he did not seem to be a commercial representative, or a functionary of a charitable organisation. Meanwhile, Captain van Toch was snorting and wiping his brow with his handkerchief; at the same time he was blinking ingenuously with his pale blue eyes. Mister Povondra suddenly decided to take the responsibility for this man onto himself. "Please come in Captain van Toch," he said, "I will announce you to Mister Bondy".

Captain J. van Toch wiped his brow with his blue handkerchief and looked round the ante-room. Hell, this Gustl has got things alright; it's like the saloon on one of those ships that sail from Rotterdam to Batavia. It must have cost a fortune. And all that by a freckly little Jew, the captain thought in admiration.

Meanwhile, in his study, G.H. Bondy was contemplating the captain's visiting card. "And what does he want with me?" he asked suspiciously.

"I'm afraid I don't know, Sir," mumbled Mister Povondra unctuously. Mister Bondy was still holding the card in his hand. And embossed ships anchor. Captain J. van Toch, Surabaya--where actually is Surabaya? Is it somewhere in Java? that seemed a very long way away to Mister Bondy. Kandong Bandoeng, that sounds like a gong being struck. Surabaya. And it feels just like the tropics

here, today. Surabaya.

"Well, you'd better show him in," Mister Bondy ordered.

The heavy man in the captain's cap stood in the doorway and saluted. G.H. Bondy went over to welcome him. "Very glad to meet you, Captain. Please, come in," he said in English.

"Hello, hello Mister Bondy," proclaimed the captain cheerfully in Czech.

"Are you Czech?" asked Mister Bondy in surprise.

"Ja, Czech. And we even know each other, Mister Bondy. From Moravia. Vantoch the grain merchant, do you remember?"

"That's right, that's right," G.H. Bondy replied with enthusiasm, although he did feel a little disappointment that this was not a Hollander after all. "Vantoch the grain merchant, on the town square, wasn't it. And you haven't changed at all, Mister Vantoch! Still just the same! And how's the grain business going?"

"Thanks," the captain replied politely. "It's been a long time now since Dad...how do you say..."

"Since he died? Oh, of course, you must be his son..." Mister Bondy's eyes came alive with a sudden memory. My dear Vantoch! You must be that Vantoch who used to fight with me when we were lads!"

"Yes, that will have been me, Mister Bondy," agreed the captain seriously. "In fact that's why they sent me away, to Ostrava, up in the north."

"You and I were always fighting. But you were stronger than me," Mister Bondy acknowledged sportingly.

"Ja, I was stronger than you. You were such a weak little Jew-boy, Mister Bondy. And you were given Hell for it."

"I was, that's true," mused G.H. Bondy, somewhat moved. But sit down, my friend! How nice of you to think of me! What brings you here?" Captain van Toch sat down with dignity into a leather armchair and laid his cap on the floor.

"I'm here on holiday, Mister Bondy. That's so."

"Do you remember," asked Mister Bondy as he sank into his memories, "how you used to shout at me: Jew-boy, Jew-boy, you go to Hell."

"Ja," the captain admitted, and he trumpeted with some emotion into his blue handkerchief. "Oh yes, they were good times, lad. But what does it matter now? Time passes. Now were both old men and both captains."

"That's true, you're a captain," Mister Bondy reminded himself. "Who'd have thought it? A Captain of Long Distances."

"Yessir. A highsealer. East India and Pacific Lines, Sir."

"A wonderful career," said Mister Bondy with a sigh. "I'd change places with you straight away, Captain. You must tell me about yourself."

"Alright then, " said the captain as he became more lively. "There's something I'd like to tell you about, Mister Bondy. Something very interesting, lad." Captain van Toch looked around uneasily.

"Are you looking for something, Captain?"

"Ja. Don't you drink beer, Mister Bondy The journey here from Surabaya made me so thirsty." The captain began to rummage in the copious pockets of his trousers and drew out his blue handkerchief, a canvas bag containing something, a bag of tobacco, a knife, a compass and a wad of banknotes. "I think we should send someone out for some beer. What about that steward who showed me in here to your cabin." Mister Bondy rang a bell.

"Nothing to worry about, Captain. Meanwhile you could light a cigar..." The captain took a cigar with a red and gold band and drew in the aroma.

"Tobacco from Lombok. Bunch of thieves there, for what it's worth." And with that, to Mister Bondy's horror, he crumbled the costly cigar in his massive hands and put the it into a pipe. "Ja, Lombok. Lombok or Sumba." By this time, Mister Povondra had made his silent appearance in the doorway.

"Bring us some beer," Mister Bondy ordered. Mister Povondra raised his

eyebrow.

"Beer? And how much beer?"

"A gallon," the captain grumbled as he stepped on a used match on the carpet. "In Aden, the heat was awful, lad. Now, Mister Bondy, I've got some news for you. From the Sunda Islands, see? There's a chance there to do some fantastic business. But I'll need to tell you the whole story. Wait." The captain's eyes turned to the ceiling as he remembered. "I don't really know where to begin." (Yet another business deal, thought G.H. Bondy to himself. God, this is going to be boring. He's going to talk to me about exporting sewing machines to Tasmania or boilers and safety pins to Fiji. Fantastic business, yes, I know. That's what I'm good for. But I'm not some junk dealer, damn it! I'm an adventurer. I'm a poet in my own way. Tell me about Sinbad, sailor-man! Tell me about Surabaya or the Phoenix Islands. Have you never been pulled of course by a magnetic mountain, have you never been captured by the bird, Noh, and taken up to its nest? Don't you come back to port with a cargo of pearls and cinnamon and hardwoods? No? Better start your lies, then.) "I suppose I could start with these lizards," the captain began.

"What lizards?" asked the businessman in surprise.

"Well, these astonishing lizards they have there, Mister Bondy."

"Where?"

"On one of these islands. I can't tell you the name, lad. That is a big secret, worth millions." Captain van Toch wiped his brow with his handkerchief. "Where the Hell has that beer got to?"

"It will be right here, Captain."

"Yes, that's good. And you ought to know that these are very decent and likable animals, these lizards. I know them, lad." The captain slammed his hand down on the table; "and if anyone says they're demons they're a liar, a damned liar, Sir. You and me are more like demons than they are, me, Captain van Toch, Sir. You can take my word for it." G.H. Bondy was startled. Delirium, he thought. Where is that damned Povondra? "There are several thousand of them there, these

lizards, but a lot of them are eaten by sharks. That's why these lizards are so rare and only in one place, in this bay that I can't give you the name of."

"You mean these lizards live in the sea?"

"Ja. In the sea. But at night they come out onto the shore, although after a while they have to go back into the water."

"And what do they look like?" (Mister Bondy was trying to gain time before that damned Povondra came back.)

"Well, about as big as a seal, but when they walk on their hind legs they'd be about this high," the captain demonstrated. "I won't tell you they're nice to look at, they're not. And they haven't got any scales. They're quite bare, Mister Bondy, naked, like a frog or a salamander. And their front paws, they're like the hands on a child, but they've only got four fingers. Poor things," the captain added in sympathy. "But they're nice animals, Mister Bondy, very clever and very likable." The captain crouched down and, still in that position, began to waddle forward. "And this is how they walk, these lizards."

The captain, with some effort and still squatting down, carried his body along in a wave-like movement; at the same time he held his hand out in front of himself like a dog begging for something and fixed his eyes on Mister Bondy in a way that seemed to beg him for sympathy. G.H. Bondy was deeply touched by this and almost felt ashamed. While this was going on, Mister Povondra appeared in the doorway with a jug of beer and raised his eyebrows in shock when he saw the captain's undignified behaviour. "Give us the beer and get out," Mister Bondy exclaimed. The captain stood up, wheezing.

"Well, that's what these animals are like, Mister Bondy. Your health," he added as he took a draught of the beer. "This is good beer you've got here, lad. But in a house like this..." The captain wiped his moustache.

"And how did you come across these lizards, Captain?"

"That's just what I wanted to tell you about, Mister Bondy. It happened like this; I was looking for pearls on Tana Masa..." the captain stopped short. "Or somewhere round those parts. Ja, it was some other island, but for the time being

that's still my secret. People are enormous thieves, Mister Bondy, you have to be careful what you say. And while those two damned Sinhalese were under water cutting away the oysters--the oysters hold as fast to the rocks like a Jew holds to his faith and have to be cut away with a knife--the lizards were there watching them, and the Sinhalese thought they were sea monsters. They're very ignorant people, these Sinhalese and Bataks. Anyway, they thought they were demons. Ja." The captain trumpeted noisily into his handkerchief. "You know, lad, it's a strange thing. I don't know whether us Czechs are more inquisitive than other people but whenever I've come across another Czech he's always had to stick his nose into everything find out what's there. I think, us Czechs, we don't want to believe in anything. So I got it into my stupid, old head that I should go and get a closer look at these demons. True, I was drunk at the time, but that was only because I couldn't get these stupid demons out of my mind. Down there on the equator, lad, down there anything's possible. So that evening I went down and had a look at Devil Bay..." Mister Bondy did his best to imagine a bay in the tropics, surrounded by cliffs and jungle.

"And then?"

"So there I was sitting by the bay and going ts-ts-ts so that the demons would come. And then, lad, after a while, a kind of lizard crawled up out of the water. It stood up on its hind legs, twisting its whole body. And it went ts-ts-ts at me. If I hadn't been drunk I probably would have shot it; but, my friend, I was sloshed as an Englishman, so I said to it, come here, hey you tapa-boy come here, I won't harm you."

"Were you speaking to it in Czech?"

"No, Malay. That's what they speak most down there, lad. He did nothing, just made a few steps here and there and looked sideways at me like a child that's too shy to talk. And all around in the water were a couple of hundred of these lizards, poking their paws up out of the water and watching me. So I, well yes I was drunk, I squatted down and began to twist about like these lizards so that they wouldn't be afraid of me. Then another lizard crawled out of the water, about the size of a ten year old boy, and he started waddling about too. And in his front paw he had an oyster." The captain took a draught of beer. "Cheers, Mister Bondy. Well it's true that I was very drunk, so I said to him, what a clever lad you are, eh, what is it you want then? Want me to open that oyster for you,

do you? Come here then, I can open it with my knife. But he just stood there, still didn't dare come any closer. So once again, I started to twist about like I was a shy little girl. Then he pattered up closer to me, I slowly held out my hand to him and took the oyster from his paw. Now, you can understand we were both a bit afraid, but I was drunk. So I took my knife and opened that oyster; I felt inside to see if there was a pearl there but there wasn't, only that vile snot, like one of those slimy molluscs that live in those shells. Alright then, I said, ts-ts-ts, you can eat it if you like. And I tossed the open oyster over to him. You should have seen how he licked it up, lad. It must have been a wonderful titbit for these lizards. Only, the poor animals weren't able to get into the hard shells with their little fingers. Life is hard, ja!" The captain took another drink of beer. "So I worked it out in my head, lad. When these lizards saw how the Sinhalese cut away the oysters they must have said to themselves, aha, so they eat oysters, and they wanted to see how these Sinhalese would open them. One of these Sinhalese looks pretty much like a lizard when he's in the water, but one of these lizards was more clever than a Sinhalese or a Batak because he wanted to learn something. And a Batak will never want to learn anything unless it's how to thief something," Captain J. van Toch added in disgust. "So when I was on that shore going ts-ts-ts and twisting about like a lizard they must have thought to themselves that I'm some kind of great-big salamander. That's why they weren't really scared of me and came closer, so that I would open the oysters for them. That's how intelligent and trusting these animals are." Captain van Toch went red. "When I'd got to know them better I took all my clothes off, so that I'd look more like them, naked; but they were still puzzled at the hairs on my chest and that sort of thing. Ja." The captain wiped his handkerchief over his blushing neck. "But I hope I'm not boring you, Mister Bondy." G.H. Bondy was enchanted.

"No, no. Not at all. Please carry on, Captain."

"Yes, yes alright then. So when this lizard had licked out the shell with all the others watching him they climbed up onto the shore. Some of them even had oysters in their paws--something odd about this, lad, is that they were able to pull them off the cliffs when they only had these little fingers without a thumb, like a child's fingers. At first they were too shy, but then they let me take the oyster out of their hands. True, they weren't proper oysters with pearls in them, all sorts of things it was they brought me, the sort of clams and the like that don't

have pearls in them, but I threw them back in the water and told them, that's no good children, they're not worth opening, I'm not going to use my knife on them. But when they brought me a pearl-oyster I opened it with my knife and checked carefully to see if there wasn't a pearl there. Then I gave it back to them for them to lick it out. So by then there was a couple of hundred of these lizards sitting round me and watching to see how it was I opened the oysters. Some of them tried to do it themselves, tried to cut round the oyster with the bits of shell that were lying around. I found that very strange, lad. No animal knows how to use tools; all that an animal knows is what's been shown to it by nature. I admit, I once saw in Buitenzorg a monkey that could open a tin can with a knife; but a monkey, that's not really a proper animal. But I did find it strange." The captain took a drink of beer. "That night, Mister Bondy, I found about eighteen pearls in those shells. Some of them were small and some were bigger and three of them were as big as the stone in a peach, Mister Bondy, as big as the stone in a peach." Captain van Toch nodded his head earnestly. "After I'd got back to my ship in the morning I said to myself, Captain van Toch, sir, it was all just dream, you were drunk, and so on. But I couldn't believe what I told myself, not when I had eighteen pearls in my pocket. Ja."

"That is the best story I've ever heard," said Mister Bondy, with a sigh. Captain van Toch was pleased at this and said,

"There, you see, lad. I thought about what had happened all that day. I would tame these lizards, wouldn't I. Ja. Tame them and train them to bring me these pearl oysters. There must have been an enormous number of them down there in Devil Bay. So that evening I went down again, but a bit earlier. When the Sun began to go down the lizards began to stick their noses out from the water, one here, then one there, until the water was full of them. I sat on the shore and went ts-ts-ts. Then I looked and saw a shark, just its fin poking up from the water. And then there was a lot of splashing and one of the lizards had had it. I counted twelve of those sharks cruising into Devil Bay in the sunset. Mister Bondy, in just one evening those monsters ate more than twenty of my lizards," the captain exclaimed and blew his nose angrily. "Ja! More than twenty! It stands to reason, a naked lizard like that with those little paws, he can't defend himself. It was enough to make you cry to see a sight like that. You should have seen it, lad..."

The captain stopped and thought for a while. "I'm quite fond of animals, you see," he said finally, and lifted his blue eyes to G.H. Bondy. "I don't know what

you think of all this, Captain Bondy..." Mister Bondy nodded to show his agreement, and this pleased Captain van Toch. "That's alright, then. "They're very good and intelligent, these tapa-boys; if you tell them something they pay attention like a dog listening to its master. And most of all, these little hands they have, like children's hands. You know lad, I'm an old man and I have no family...Ja, an old man can be very lonely," the captain complained as he overcame his emotion. "It's very easy to become fond of these lizards, for what it's worth. But if only the sharks didn't keep eating them like that! Then when I went after them, after those sharks, and I threw stones at them, then they started throwing stones too, these tapa-boys. You won't believe it, Mister Bondy. True, they couldn't throw the stones very far because their hands were so small, but it was all very strange. As you're so clever, I said to them, you can try and open some of these oysters yourselves with my knife. So I put the knife down on the ground. They were a bit shy at first, but then one of them tried it, pushing the point of the knife between the two halves of the shell. You've got to lever it open, I told him, lever it, see? Twist the knife round, like this, and there, that's it. And he kept on trying, poor thing, until it gave way and the shell opened. There, you see, I said. Not that hard, is it. If some pagan Batak or Sinhalese can do it then why shouldn't a tapa-boy do it too, eh? Now, Mister Bondy, I wasn't going to tell these lizards how it was wonderful, marvellous, astonishing to see what an animal like that could do, but now I can tell you that I was...I was...well simply thunderstruck."

"As I can see," answered Mister Bondy.

"Yes, that's right. As you can see. I was so confused at all this that I stayed there another day with my ship, and then in the evening went back to Devil Bay and once more I watched how the sharks were eating my lizards. That night I swore that I would put an end to that, lad. I even gave them my word of honour. Tapa-boys, I said, Captain J. van Toch hereby promises, under the majesty of all these stars, that I will help you."

Chapter 4

Captain Van Toch's Business

While Captain van Toch was saying this the hair on the back of his neck had risen with his anger and excitement. "And so I swore. And ever since then, lad, I've not had a moments peace. In Padang I took some leave due to me and sent a hundred and seven pearls to those Jew-boys in Amsterdam, everything those animals of mine had brought me. Then I found a kind of lad, Dayak he was, a shark-killer, they go in the water and kill the sharks with a knife. Terrible thief and murderer he was, this Dayak. And then with him on a little tramp-steamer, we went back to Tana Masa, and now, lad, in you go and kill these sharks with your knife. I wanted him to kill the sharks so that they'd leave my lizards in peace, but this Dayak was such a cut-throat and pagan he didn't do a thing, not even for those tapa-boys. He didn't give a damn about the job. And all this time I was making my own observations and experiments with these lizards-- just a minute, I've got a ships logbook here where I noted everything down every day." The captain drew a voluminous set of notes out from his breast pocket and began to leaf through them. "What's the date today? I know, the twenty-fifth of June. Now, the twenty-fifth June for instance--last year, this was--I was here and the Dayak was out killing sharks. These lizards have a real big liking for carrion. Toby--that was one of the lizards, a smallish one, clever though," explained the captain. "I had to give them some sort of a name, didn't I, so that I could write about them in this book. So, Toby pushed his fingers into the hole the knife had left. Evening, they brought a dry branch for my fire. No, that's nothing," the captain grumbled. "I'll find another day. Lets say, the twentieth of June, shall we? The lizards continued building their jetty. This was some kind of dam. They were building a new dam at the north-western end of Devil Bay. And this was a fantastic piece of work, lad," the captain explained, "a proper breakwater. And they brought their eggs down to this side of it where the water would be quiet. They thought it up all by themselves, this dam; and I can tell you, no clerk or engineer from Waterstaat in Amsterdam could have made a better plan for a submerged breakwater than they did. An amazingly skilled piece of work. And they dug out, sort of, deep holes in the banks under the water and lived in them during the day. Amazingly clever animals, just like beavers, those great big mice that build dams on a river. And they had a lot of these dams in Devil Bay, big

ones and small ones, lovely smooth and level dams, it looked like a city. In the end they wanted to put a dam right across the whole of Devil Bay. That's how it was. They can now lift boulders with a lever, " he read on. " Albert--that was one of the tapa-boys--crushed two of his fingers. Twenty-first: The Dayak ate Albert! But it made him ill. Fifteen drops of opium. Promised not to do it again. Rain all day. Thirtieth of June: Lizards finished building dam. Toby did not want to work. Now, he was clever, Toby," the captain explained with admiration. "The clever ones never want to do anything. He was always working things out with his hands, this Toby. For what it's worth, there are big differences between lizards just like between people. Third of July: Sergeant got the knife. This Sergeant, he was a big strong lizard. And very clever with it. Seventh of July: Sergeant used knife to kill a cuttle-fish. Tenth of July: Sergeant killed big jelly-fish with knife. Strange sort of animal, a jelly-fish is. Looks like jelly but stings like a nettle. And now, Mister Bondy, listen to this. I've got it underlined. Sergeant killed a small shark with the knife. Seventy pounds weight. So there you see it, Mister Bondy," Captain J. van Toch declared in triumph. "Here it is in black and white. That was the big day, lad. To be precise, the thirteenth of July last year." The captain closed his notes. "I'm not ashamed to admit it, Mister Bondy; I knelt down on the shore by that Devil Bay and wept for sheer joy. I knew then that my tapa-boys would not give up. Sergeant got a lovely new harpoon as a reward--a harpoon is best if you're going to go hunting sharks, lad--and I said to him, be a man, Sergeant, and show these tapa-boys they can defend themselves. And do you know," here the captain raised his voice, jumped up and thumped the table in his excitement, "within three days there was a dead shark floating in the bay, horribly mutilated, full of gashes. And all the gashes made by this harpoon." The captain gulped down some more beer. "That's just how it was, Mister Bondy. It was then that I made a kind of a contract with these tapa-boys. That is, I gave them my word that if they would bring me these pearl oysters then I would give them these harpoons and knives for them to defend themselves, see? That's fair business. Whatever he does, a man should be honest even to animals like these. And I gave them some wood too, and two iron wheelbarrows for them to carry the stones for the dam. And the poor things had to pull everything in those tiny hands of theirs. Terrible for them, that's how it was. And I wouldn't have wanted to cheat them. Hold on, lad, I'll show you something." Captain van Toch lifted his belly with one hand and with the other pulled a canvas bag out of his trouser pocket. "Look what I've got here," he said, and emptied it out onto the table. There was a thousand pearls there of all

different sizes: some as small as a seed, some the size of a pea and some of them were the size of a cherry; perfectly round pearls, lumpy and irregular pearls, silvery pearls, blue pearls, yellowish pearls like persons skin and pearls of all colours from black to pink. G.H. Bondy's jaw dropped; he could not help himself and had to touch them, roll them around in the tips of his fingers, cover them in both his hands.

"These are beautiful," he sighed in wonder and amazement. "Captain, this is like a dream!"

"Ja," said the captain without emotion. "They are nice. And that year that I was down there they killed about thirty of those sharks. I've got it written down here," he said, tapping on his breast pocket. "And all with the knives I'd given them, them and the five harpoons. Those knives cost me nearly two American dollars a piece. Very good knives, lad, stainless steel, won't go rusty in the water, not even sea water. And those Bataks cost me a lot of money too.

"What Bataks?"

"Those native Bataks on that island. They think the tapa-boys are some kind of demon and they're terribly afraid of them. And when they saw me talking with these demons of theirs they just wanted to kill me. All night long they were banging on a kind of gong so that they would chase the demons away from their village. Made a Hell of a noise. And then in the morning they wanted me to pay them for it. For all the work they'd had in doing it. For what it's worth, I can tell you that these Bataks are terrible thieves. But the tapa-boys, the lizards, you can do honest business with them. Very good honest business, Mister Bondy." To Mister Bondy it seemed like he was in a fairy tale.

"Buying pearls from them?"

"Ja. Only there aren't any pearls left now in Devil Bay, and on other islands there aren't any tapa-boys. And that's the whole problem, lad." Captain J. van Toch looked up as if in triumph. "And that's the big business that I thought out in my head. "Listen lad," he said, stabbing the air with his chubby finger, "there's a lot more of those lizards there now than when I first found them! They can defend themselves now, you see. Eh? And there are going to be more and more of them! Now then, Mister Bondy, don't you think this is a fantastic business

opportunity?"

"I still don't quite see," replied G.H. Bondy uncertainly, "what exactly it is you have in mind, Captain."

"To transport these tapa-boys to other islands where there are other pearl-fishing grounds," the captain finally exclaimed. I saw myself how these lizards can't get across the deep and open sea. They can swim for a little way and they can walk a little way along the seabed, but where the sea is very deep the pressure there is too much for them; they're very soft, you see. But if I had some sort of ship with some kind of tank built into it for them I could take them wherever I wanted, see? And there they could look for the pearls and I would follow behind and provide them with the knives and harpoons and anything else they need. The poor lads increased their population so much in Devil Bay that they soon won't have enough there to eat. They eat the smallest of the fish and molluscs, and those water insects they have there; but they can eat potatoes too, and rusks and ordinary things like that. So that means they could be fed while they're in the tanks on the ship. And I could let them out into the water in suitable places where there aren't many people and there I could have sort of...sort of farms for these lizards of mine. And I'd want them to be able to feed themselves, these animals. They're very likable, Mister Bondy, and very clever too. And when you see them, lad, you'll say, Hullo Captain, useful animals you've got here. Ja. And they're mad about pearls now, just like people. That's the big business I thought up."

All this left G.H. Bondy in some embarrassment and confusion. "I'm very sorry, Captain," he began hesitantly, "I...I really don't know..." The clear blue eyes of Captain J. van Toch filled with tears.

"That is not good, lad. I could leave you all these pearls here as...as collateral for the ship, but I can't buy the ship all by myself. I know of a very good ship here in Rotterdam...it's fitted with a diesel engine..."

"Why did you not suggest this business to someone in Holland?" The captain shook his head.

"I know these people, lad. I can't talk about this sort of thing with them. They," he said thoughtfully, "would make me carry all sorts of other things on the ship,

and I'd have to sell them all round these islands. Ja. That's something I could do. I know a lot of people, Mister Bondy. And at the same time I could have the tanks on board with my lizards in them..."

"That's something it might well be worth thinking about," considered G.H. Bondy. "As it happens, you see...Well you see we need to find new markets for our products, and I was talking about this with some people not long ago. I would need to buy one or two ships, one for south America and the other for these eastern places ..." The captain became more lively.

"That's very wise of you, Mister Bondy. Ships are very cheap right now, you could buy a whole harbour full of them..." The captain launched into a deep and technical explanation of what vessels are for sale where and at what prices and boats and tank-steamers; G.H. Bondy did not listen to him but merely watched; G.H. Bondy was a good judge of character. He had not taken Captain van Toch's story about the lizards seriously for one moment; but the captain himself was somebody worth taking seriously. Honest, yes. And he knew his way around down there. Mad, obviously. But very likeable. All this struck a chord in G.H. Bondy's heart and chimed with his love of fantasy. Ships carrying pearls and coffee, ships with spices and all the scents of Arabia. There was a particular, indescribable feeling that G.H. Bondy had before each major and successful decision he made; a sensation which might have been expressed in words thus: It's true I don't really know why, but I think I'll go along with this. He had this feeling now. Meanwhile Captain van Toch was waving his enormous hands in the air to outline ships with awning decks or quarter decks, fantastic ships, lad ...

"I'll tell you what, Captain Vantoch," G.H. Bondy suddenly said, "come back here in two weeks time. We can talk about this ship again then." Captain van Toch understood just how much these words meant. He blushed in happiness and said,

"And what about the lizards, can I take them on my ship too?"

"Yes, of course. Only please don't mention them to anyone. People would think you've gone mad--and so would I."

"And can I leave these pearls here with you?"

"Yes, if you want to."

"Ja, but I'll choose two of the nicest of them that I need to send off to someone."

"Who's that?"

"Just a couple of newspaper men I know, lad. Oh Hell, wait a minute."

"What is it?"

"What the Hell were their names?" Captain van Toch blinked his blue eyes thoughtfully. "This head of mine is so stupid, lad. I've completely forgotten what those two lads were called."

Chapter 5

How Captain J. Van Toch Trained the Lizards

"Well I'm blowed," said a man in Marseille. "It's Jensen, isn't it?" Jensen, the Swede, raised his eyes.

"Wait," he said, "and don't say a word until I've placed you." He put his hand to his brow. "The Seagull, wasn't it? No. Empress of India? No. Pernambuco? No. I've got it. Vancouver. Five years ago on the Vancouver, Osaka Line, Frisco. And your name is Dingle, you rascal, Irish." The man grinned and exposed his yellow teeth as he sat down to join Jensen.

"Dat's right, Jensen. And if there's a drink goin I'll have it, whatever it is. What brings you to dese parts?" Jensen nodded toward the dock.

"I do the Marseille to Saigon route these days. And you?"

"I'm on leave," said Dingle with a swagger. "I'm on me way home to see how many children I've got now." Jensen nodded his head earnestly.

"So they sacked you again, did they? Drunk on duty were you? If you went to the YMCA like I do then..." Dingle grinned cheerfully.

"Dey've got a YMCA here, you mean?"

"Today is Saturday," Jensen grumbled. "And where have you been sailing?"

"On a kind of a tramp steamer," said Dingle evasively. "All the islands you can tink of down under."

"Captain?"

"Some fella called van Toch. Dutchman or sometin." Jensen the Swede became thoughtful.

"Captain van Toch. I have travelled with him also, brother, some years back. Ship: the Kandong Bandoeng. Line: from demon to Devil. Fat, bald and able to

swear in Malay for better effect. I know him well."

"Was he already such a lunatic in dem days?" The Swede shook his head.

"Old man Toch is all right."

"And had he started carrying dem lizards of his about wid him by den?"

"No." Jensen thought for a while. "I heard something about that ...in Singapore. Someone was talking all that rubbish there." The Irishman seemed somewhat offended.

"Dat is not rubbish, Jensen. Dat's de holy truth about dese lizards."

"This man in Singapore, he said it was true as well," the Swede grumbled. "So I gave him a smack in the teeth," he added in triumph.

"Well just you listen to me," Dingle defended himself. "I ought to know about dese tings, cause I've seen dese brutes wid me own eyes."

"So have I," mumbled Jensen. "Almost black, with a tail about six feet long, and they run about on two feet. I know."

"Hideous brutes," shuddered Dingle. "Notting but warts. Holy Mary, I wouldn't touch em for anyting. And I'm sure dey must be poisonous and all!"

"Why not?" grumbled the Swede. "Listen. I served once on a ship that was full of people. All over the upper deck and the lower deck, nothing but people, full of women and all that sort of thing, dancing and playing cards. I was the stoker there, see. And now you tell me, you idiot, which do you think is more poisonous?"

Dingle spat. "Well if it's Caymans you're talking about, den I won't say notting against you. There was one time I was takin a shipload of snakes to a zoo, from Bandjarmasin they were, and God how they stank! But dese lizards, Jensen, dese are some very strange animals were talkin about. All through the day they stay in that tank o water o theirs; but in the night they climb up out of it-- tip-tap tip-tap tip-tap--and the whole ship was crawlin wid em. Stood up on their hind legs, they did, twistin their heads round to get a good look at you..." The Irishman

crossed himself. "And they'd go ts-ts-ts at you, just like dem whores in Hong Kong. God forgive me, but I tink there's sometin funny going on there. If it wasn't so hard to get a job I wouldn't have stayed there a minute, Jens. Not one minute."

"Aha," said Jensen. "So that is why you are running home to your mummy, is it?"

"Well, dat's part of it. Just to stay there at all a fella had to keep drinking a Hell of a lot, and you know the captains got a ting about that. And the funny ting is, they say that one day I kicked one o the horrors. D'ye hear dat, kicked one o dem, and kicked it so hard that I broke its spine. You should have seen how the captain went on about it; he turned blue, lifted me up by the neck and he would have thrown me overboard into the water if Gregory, the mate, hadn't been there. D'ye know Gregory?" The Swede merely nodded. "That's enough now, Captain, says the mate, and he pours a bucket of water over me head. So in Kokopo I went on shore." Mister Dingle spat in a long, flat curve. "The old man cares more about dem vermin then he does about people. D'ye know he taught em how to speak? On my soul, he used to shut himself in wid em and spend hours talking to them. I tink he's trainin em for a circus or sometin. But the strangest ting of all is that then he lets them out into the water. He'd weigh anchor by some pathetic little island, take a boat out to the shore and check how deep it is there; then he'd come back to these tanks, open the hatch in the side o the ship and let these vermin out into the water. And you should see them jumpin out through this hatch one after the other like trained seals, ten or twenty o them. Then in the night old Toch would row out to the shore again with some kind o crates. And no-one was ever allowed to know what was in them. Then we'd sail on again somewhere else. So that's how it is wid old Toch, Jens. Very strange. Very, very strange." Mister Dingle's eyes lost their sparkle. "Almighty God, Jens, it gave me the creeps! And I drank, Jens, drank like a lunatic; and in the night, when there was this tip-tappin all over the ship, and you could hear them going ts-ts-ts, sometimes I'd tink it was just because of the drink. I'd already had that once in Frisco, well you already know about that, don't you Jensen; only in them days it was just millions of spiders I saw. De-li-rium, the doctors called it in the sailor-hospital. Well, I don't know. But then I asked Big Bing about it, whether he'd been seein tings in the night and all, and he said he had been. Said he'd seen them wid his own eyes how one o these lizards turned the handle on the door and

went into the captains cabin. Well, I don't know; this Joe, he was a Hell of a drinker and all. What do you tink, Jens, do you tink Bing had this delirium too? What do you tink?" Jensen the Swede merely shrugged his shoulders. "And dat German fella, Peters, he said that when they rowed the captain down to the shore in the Manihiki Islands they hid behind some boulders and watched what the old man was doing wid dem crates of his. Now he says them lizards opened the crates all by themselves, that the old man gave them the chisel to do it with. And d'you know what was in them crates? Knives, he said. Great big long knives and harpoons and that sort o ting. Now I don't believe a word of what Peters said meself cause he has to wear them glasses on his nose, but it's very strange all the same. Now what do you tink of all this?"

The veins on Jensen's brow bulged. "What I think of this," he growled, "is that this German of yours in sticking his nose into things that are none of his business, understand? And I can tell you I don't think that's wise of him."

"You'd better write and tell him, then," smirked the Irishman. "The safest address to write to would be Hell, you can get hold of him there. And d'you know what it is that I find strange about all o dis? That old Toch goes and visits those lizards of his now and then, down in whatever place he's set them down in. 'Pon my soul, Jens. He has himself put down on shore in de middle o de night and doesn't come back till mornin. Now you tell me, Jensen, what is it he goes down there for? And you tell me, what is it he's got in dem parcels he sends off to Europe? Parcels as big as this, look, and he has them insured for up to a thousand pounds."

"How do you know that?" asked the Swede, scowling even more.

"A fella knows what he knows," replied Mister Dingle evasively. "And do you know where old Toch got dese lizards from? From Devil Bay. Now there's a fella I know down there, an agent he is, and an educated man, like, and he told me that dese tings are not trained lizards. Nottin o de sort. And if anyone says dese are nottin more than animals you can go and tell dat to the fairies. And don't let anyone tell you otherwise, lad." Mister Dingle gave a significant wink. "Dat's how it is, Jensen, just so's you know. And are you gonna tell me now that Captain van Toch is alright?"

"Say that again," grunted the big Swede threateningly.

"If old man Toch was alright he wouldn't be carrying demons round the world wid him...and he wouldn't be settlin em down in all the islands he can find like lice in a fur coat. Listen, just in the time that I was on board wid him he must have settled a good couple o thousand o them. The old mans sold his soul, man. And I know what it is that these devils are givin him for it. Rubies and pearls and all o that sort o ting. And you can well believe he wouldn't be doin it for nottin."

Jens Jensen turned a deep red. "And what business is it of yours?" he yelled, slamming his hand down on the table. "You mind your own damned business!" Little Dingle jumped back in alarm.

"Please," he stuttered in confusion, "what's suddenly...I was only telling you what it was I'd seen. And if you like,...it was just the impression I got. This is you, Jensen, I can tell you it's all just delirium if dat's what you want. You needn't get cross wid me like dat, Jensen. I've already had that meself once in Frisco, you know about that. Serious case it was, that's what the doctors in the sailor-hospital said. You have me word of honour I saw these lizards or demons or whatever they were. But maybe there weren't any."

"You did see them, Pat," said the Swede gloomily. "I saw them too."

"No Jens," answered Dingle, "you were just delirious. He's all right, old man Toch, only he shouldn't be carryin demons about all round the world. Tell you what, once I get back home I'll have a mass said for the good of his soul. Hang me if I don't."

"We don't do that in our faith," said Jensen, deep in thought and quieter now. "And do you really think it would help someone to have a mass said for him?"

"Enormous help," exclaimed the Irishman. "I've heard of lots of cases in Ireland when it's been of help, even in the most serious cases. Even when it's involved demons and the like."

"Then I shall also have a Catholic mass said for him," Jens Jensen decided. "Only I'll have it done here in Marseille. I think they'll do it cheaper in the big church here, factory prices."

"You could be right there, but an Irish mass is better. You see, in Ireland they've

got these priests that really can work magic. Just like some fakir or pagan."

"Listen Pat," said Jensen, "I would give you twelve francs for this mass here and now. But you are riff-raff, brother; you would just drink it."

"Now Jens, man, d'ye tink I'd take a sin like dat on meself? But listen, just so that you'll believe me I'll write you out an IOU for that twelve francs, will that do you?"

"That would be all right," thought the Swede, who liked to see things done properly. Mister Dingle borrowed a pen and a piece of paper and laid it out flat on the table.

"Now what am I to write down here?" Jens Jensen looked over the Irishman's shoulder.

"So write down at the top that this is a receipt." And Mister Dingle, slowly and with his slimey tongue protruding from his mouth with the effort of it, wrote:

RECEET

I CONFIRM THAT I HAVE RECEEVED FROM
JENS JENSEN THE SOM OF 12 FRANCS FOR
A MASS FOR THE SOUL OF CAPTAIN TOCH

PAT DINGLE

"Is dat all right, like dat?" asked Mister Dingle uncertainly. "And which of us is going keep dis piece o paper?"

"You are of course, you fool," said the Swede. "A receipt is so that a person won't forget he has been given money."

Mister Dingle drank those twelve francs away in Le Havre. He also, instead of going to Ireland, sailed off down to Djibouti; in short, that mass was never said, with the result that no higher power ever did interfere in the course of the events to follow.

Chapter 6

The Yacht in the Lagoon

Mister Abe Loeb squinted into the setting sun; he would have like in some way to express how beautiful it was, but his sweetheart, Li, alias Miss Lily Valley, whose real name was Miss Lilian Nowak and who was known in short as golden-haired Li, White Lily, Lily Longlegs and all the other names she had been called during her seventeen years, slept on the warm sand, nestled in a fluffy bathing gown and curled up like a sleeping dog. That is why Abe said nothing about the beauty of the world and merely sighed, scratching his naked feet because there was sand on them. Out there on the ocean was the yacht named after Gloria Pickford; Abe had been given the yacht by his father for passing his university entrance exam. His father was a great guy. Jesse Loeb, film magnate and so on. Abe, said the old man, go and get to know something of the world and take a few of your friends with you. Jesse Loeb was a truly great guy. Gloria Pickford lay out there on the pearly waters and next to him, in the warm sand, lay his sweetheart, Li. Abe sighed with happiness. She was sleeping like a little child, poor thing. Abe felt a yearning to protect her somehow. I really ought to marry her, thought the young Mister Loeb to himself, and as he did so he was tortured with the beautiful feeling in his heart that comes when a firm decision is mixed with fear. Mamma Loeb would be unlikely to agree to it and Papa Loeb made decisions with his hands: You're crazy, Abe. His parents would be unable to understand it, and that was all there was to it. And Mister Abe, sighing with tenderness, covered the white ankle of his sweetheart with the tip of her bathing gown. How come I've got such hairy feet? he thought, absent mindedly.

God it's beautiful here, so beautiful. It's a shame that Li can't see it. Mister Abe looked at her charming outline, and through some vague association began to think about art. This was because his sweetheart, Li, was an artist. A film artist. True, she had never actually been in any films, but she was quite certain she would become the greatest film actress ever; and when Li was certain of something that was what happened. That was what Mamma Loeb couldn't understand; an artist is simply an artist, and she can't be like other girls. And anyway, other girls were no better than she was, Mister Abe decided; that Judy

on the yacht, for instance, a rich girl like her--and Abe knew that Fred went into her cabin. Every night, in fact. Whereas Li and I...well Li just isn't like that. I want Baseball Fred to have the best, Abe thought generously, he's a friend from university, but every night...a rich girl like her oughtn't to do that. I think that a girl from a family like Judy's...and Judy isn't even an artist. (That's what these girls sometimes gossip about, Abe remembered; with their eyes shining, and giggling...I never talk about that sort of thing with Fred.) (Li oughtn't to drink so many cocktails, she never knows what she's talking about afterwards.) (This afternoon, for example, she didn't need to...) (I think she and Judy were arguing about who has nicer legs. Why, it clearly has to be Li. I know these things.) (And Fred didn't have to have that dumb idea about a beautiful legs contest. They might do that kind of thing on Palm Beach, but not in private company. And the girls didn't have to lift their skirts so high. That was more than just legs. At least, Li didn't have to. And right there in front of Fred! And a rich girl like Judy didn't have to do it either.) (Maybe I oughtn't to have called the captain over to be the judge. That was dumb of me. The captain went so red, and his mustache stuck out, and he excused himself and slammed the door. Awful. Just awful. The captain didn't have to be so coarse about it. And anyway, it's my yacht, isn't it?) (True, the captain doesn't have a sweetheart with him on board; so how's he going to look on that sort of thing, poor man? Seeing as he's got no choice but to be alone, I mean.) (And why did Li cry when Fred said Judy has nice legs? And then she said Fred was a brute, that he was spoiling the whole trip...Poor Li!) (And now the girls aren't talking to each other. And when I wanted to talk to Fred Judy called him over like a dog. Fred is my best friend after all. And if he's Judy's lover of course he's going to say she has nicer legs! True, he didn't have to be so emphatic about it. That wasn't very tactful towards poor Li; Li is right when she says Fred is a self centered brute. A heck of a brute.) (I really didn't think the trip was going to turn out like this. Devil take that Fred!)

Mister Abe realised that he was no longer looking blissfully out at the pearly ocean, but that he was scowling, scowling very hard. He was anxious and no longer in a good mood. Go out and see something of the world, Papa Loeb had said. Well have we seen something of the world? Mister Abe tried hard to remember what exactly it was he had seen, but he wasn't able to remember anything except how Judy and Li, his sweetheart, had shown their legs to Fred, big shouldered Fred, squatting down in front of them. Abe scowled even harder. What's this coral island called anyway? Taraiva, the captain had said. Taraiva, or

Tahuara or Taraihatuara-ta-huara. How about if we go back now, and I can say to old Jesse; Dad, we've been to Taraihatuara-ta-huara. (If only I hadn't called the captain over, Mister Abe frowned.) (I have to talk to Li so that she won't do that sort of thing. God, why do I love her so much! I'll talk to her as soon as she wakes up. I'll tell her we ought to get married...) Mister Abe's eyes were full of tears; oh God, is this love or pain, or is this endless pain just part of me being in love with her?

Sweetheart Li's eyes, made up in blue like a tender shell, fluttered. "Abe," she called sleepily, "know what I've been thinking? I've been thinking that on this island you could make a fan-tas-tic film." Mister Abe sprinkled fine sand over his unfortunately hairy feet.

"Excellent idea, sweetheart. And what sort of film?" Sweetheart Li opened her boundless blue eyes.

"Well how about...Imagine I was stuck on this island like Robinson Crusoe. A female Robinson Crusoe. Don't you think that's a great new idea?"

"Yeah," said Mister Abe uncertainly. "And how would you have gotten onto this island?"

"Easy," came her sweet reply. "Our yacht would just have been shipwrecked in a storm, and all of you would have been drowned, you and Judy and the captain and everyone."

"And how about Fred? Fred's a very strong swimmer." Li's smooth brow became furrowed.

"In that case, Fred will have to be eaten by a shark. That'd be a great piece of detail," said Abe's sweetheart, clapping her hands as she did so. "And Fred has a really beautiful body for it, don't you think?" Mister Abe sighed.

"And what happens after that?"

"And then I'd be thrown unconscious onto the shore by a big wave. I'd be wearing those pyjamas, the ones with the blue stripes you liked so much the other day." She narrowed her eyes and looked at him in the tender way she had seen used to depict female seductiveness. "And the film really needs to be in

color, Abe. Everyone says how much the color blue goes with my hair."

"And who would find you here?" asked Mister Abe objectively." His sweetheart thought for a while.

"No-one. I wouldn't be a Robinson Crusoe if there were people here," she said with a surprising grasp of logic. That's what would make it such a great role, because I'd always be on my own. Just imagine it, Abe, Lily Valley in the title role and only role!"

"And what would you be doing all through the film?" Li leant up on her elbow.

"I've got that all thought out. I'd swim in the lagoon and I'd climb up on the rocks and sing."

"In your pyjamas?"

"Without my pyjamas," said Abe's sweetheart. "Don't you think that'd be a great success?"

"Well you can't do the whole film naked," grumbled Abe, who felt strongly opposed to the idea.

"Why not?" answered his sweetheart in innocent surprise. "Who'd be there to see me?" Mister Abe said something that could not be properly heard. "And then," Li considered, "and then...I've got it. Then I'd be captured by a gorilla, you know? A gorilla that's really big and black and hairy." Mister Abe went red, and tried to hide his damned hairy feet even deeper in the sand.

"They don't have any gorillas on this island," he objected, not very convincingly.

"Yes they do. They've got every possible kind of animal here. You have to look at it scientifically, Abe. And a gorilla would go so well with my complexion. Have you noticed how Judy has hairs on her legs?"

"No," said Abe, somewhat displeased at this change of subject.

"Awful legs," thought Abe's sweetheart as she looked down at her own. "And as the gorilla carries me away in its arms a young and handsome wild man would

come out of the jungle and knock it down."

"How would he be dressed?"

"He'd have a bow and arrow," was his sweethearts unhesitating reply, "and a wreath on his head. And this wild man would pick me up and take me to the cannibals' campfire."

"There aren't any cannibals here," said Abe in defence of the island of Tahuara.

"There are too! And the cannibals would want to sacrifice me to their idols and they'd be singing like they do in Hawaii, you know, like those negroes in the Paradise Restaurant. But one of the young cannibals would fall in love with me," sighed Abe's sweetheart, her eyes wide open in amazement, "and then another of the savages would fall in love with me, it could be the cannibal chief this time, and then a white man..."

"Where did this white man come from?" asked Abe, just to be sure.

"Hell have been there from the start. He could be a famous tenor who's fallen into the savages clutches. That's so that he can sing in the film."

"And what would he be wearing?" Abe's sweetheart looked at her big to.

"He should be...he should be naked, just like the cannibals." Mister Abe shook his head.

"Sweetheart, that wouldn't work. Famous tenors are always horribly fat."

"Oh, that's such a shame," lamented Abe's sweetheart. "Maybe Fred could play that part and then the tenor could just do the singing, you know how they do that dubbing in films."

"But Fred was eaten by a shark!" Abe's sweetheart frowned.

"You don't need to be so realistic all the time, Abe. I just can't talk about art with you. And then this king of the cannibals would put strings and strings of pearls around my neck..."

"Where does he get them from?"

"Why there's lots of pearls here," Li insisted. "And then Fred gets jealous and boxes with him on the rocks overlooking the sea as it crashes on shore. Don't you think Fred would have a fantastic silhouette against the sky? Isn't that a great idea? And then the two of them would fall into the sea..." This thought cheered Abe up slightly. "And then you could have that detail with the shark. Think how mad it would make Judy if Fred played in a film with me! And I'd get married to this beautiful wild man." The golden-haired Li jumped up from where she lay. "I'd be standing here on the shore like this, outlined against the setting sun, entirely naked, and the film would slowly come to a close." Li threw off her bathing gown. "And now I'm going to go for a swim."

"...You haven't got your bathing suit," pointed out Abe in alarm, looking out to the yacht to see if anyone was watching; but Li, his sweetheart, was already dancing across the sand to the lagoon.

Suddenly, Abe heard a voice: "Actually, she does look better with her clothes on." The voice was brutally cool and critical. Abe felt crushed at his lack of erotic admiration, he even felt almost guilty about it. But, well, when Li is wearing her clothes and stockings she does, well, seem more beautiful somehow. In his own defence, Abe considered that what he meant was more decent. Well, that as well. And nicer. And why's she running like that? And why do her thighs wobble like that? And why...Stop this! Abe told himself in horror. Li is the most beautiful girl that ever lived. And I'm terribly in love with her. "Even when she's got nothing on?" asked the cool and critical voice. Abe turned his eyes away and looked at the yacht in the lagoon. It was so beautiful, every line was perfect! It's a shame that Fred isn't here. If Fred were here we could talk about how beautiful the yacht is.

Meanwhile, Abe's sweetheart had reached the water and was standing in it up to her knees, her arms were stretched out to the setting Sun and she was singing. She can go and swim in Hell, thought Abe in irritation. But it had been nice while she was lying there curled up in a ball, wrapped in her bathing gown and with her eyes closed. Dear Li. And with a touching sigh, Abe kissed the sleeve of her bathing gown. Yes, he was terribly in love with her. So much in love it hurt.

There was a sudden, piercing scream from the lagoon. Abe lifted himself up on his elbow so that he could see better. Li, his sweetheart, was screaming, waving her arms in the air and rushing through the water to the shore, floundering and splashing water all around. Abe jumped up and ran to her. "What is it, Li?" (Look at that stupid way she runs, the cool and critical voice remarked. She throws her legs about. She flaps her arms about. It just isn't nice. And she's even squawking as she does it, yes, she squawks.) "What's happened, Li?" called Abe as he ran to her assistance.

"Abe, Abe," squawked his sweetheart, and all of a sudden she was there hanging, cold and wet, around his neck. "Abe there's some kind of animal out there!"

"Why that's nothing," laughed Abe. "It must be some kind of fish."

"Not with an awful head like that," his sweetheart howled, and pressed her wet nose against Abe's breast. Abe wanted to pat her on the shoulder like a father, but on her wet body it would have sounded more like a slap.

"Alright, alright," he muttered, "look out there, there's nothing there any more." Li looked out to the lagoon.

"It was awful," she sighed, then suddenly started to howl again. "There, there, you see it?" There was the black head of something above the water slowly coming in to shore, its mouth opening and closing. Abe's sweetheart Li screamed hysterically and set off in desperate flight away from the water.

Abe did not know what he should do. Should he run after Li so that she would not be so afraid? Or should he stay where he was to show that he had no fear of this animal himself? He chose, of course, the second option; strode towards the sea until he was up to his ankles in water and, his fists clenched, looked the creature in the eye. The black head stopped coming closer, it swayed oddly, and said: Ts-ts-ts. Abe was somewhat uneasy about this, but he could not possibly let it be seen. "What is it you want?" he said sharply.

"Ts-ts-ts," the head replied.

"Abe, Abe, A-a-abe," sweetheart Li shrieked.

"I'm coming," Abe replied, and he slowly (so that nobody would get the wrong

idea) went back towards his girl. He stopped and turned to look severely at the sea. At the waters edge, where the sea never stops tracing its lacey patterns in the sand, there was some kind of dark-coloured animal standing on its hind legs. Its head was round and its body swayed. Abe stood where he was with his heart beating fast.

"Ts-ts-ts," said the animal.

"A-a-abe" wailed his sweetheart, close to fainting. Abe walked backwards, step by step, without letting the animal out of his sight. The animal did not move but merely turned its head to watch him. At last, Abe was once more with his sweetheart, who was lying with her face to the ground and howling and blubbering with the horror of it.

"It's...it's some kind of seal," said Abe uncertainly. "We really ought to go back to the ship, Li." But Li merely shuddered. "There's nothing there to be frightened of," Abe insisted. He wanted to kneel down beside Li, but it was his duty to stand like a knight in armour between her and the beast. He wished he were wearing more than just bathing trunks, or that he had at least something like a penknife with him, or that he could find a stick.

It was beginning to get dark. The animal came closer again and stopped about thirty paces away. And behind it were five, six, eight of the same animal appearing out of the sea and hesitantly, swaying and tip-tapping, they made their way to where Abe was protecting his sweetheart, Li. "Don't look, Li," gasped Abe, although this was quite unnecessary as Li would not have looked for anything in the world. More of the shadows came out of the sea and formed into a broad semi-circle. By now there was about sixty of them, Abe reckoned. That light patch was his sweetheart Li's bathing gown, the gown she had been asleep in only a short time before. The animals had come as far as this light patch, which lay carelessly thrown down on the sand.

Then Abe did something as natural and as nonsensical as the knight in the Schiller story who went into the lion's cage to fetch his lady's glove. There are many natural and nonsensical things that men will keep on doing for as long as the world is still spinning. Without thinking, and with his head erect and his fists clenched, Mister Abe Loeb went in among the animals to fetch the bathing gown belonging to his sweetheart, Li.

The animals stepped back slightly but did not run away. Abe picked up the gown, threw it over his arm like a toreador and remained standing where he was. "A-abe," came the desperate whine from behind him.

Mister Abe felt a sense of boundless strength and nobility. "What then?" he said to the animals, taking a step closer. "What exactly is it you want?"

"Ts-ts," hissed one of the animals, and then, in a rasping voice like an old mans, it barked, "Knife!" The other animals, a little way away joined in, barking like the first: "Knife, knife, knife!"

"A-abe!"

"Don't be afraid, Li," Abe called back.

"Li," came a bark from in front of him. "Li." "Li."

"A-a-abe!" To Abe it seemed like he was dreaming.

"What is it?"

"Knife!"

"A-a-abe!" wailed his sweetheart. "Come back here!"

"Right away.--I don't have a knife. I'm not going to hurt you. What is it you want?"

"Ts-ts," hissed another of them as it swayed its way across to him. Abe stood with his legs apart, the gown still over his arm, but he did not retreat. "Ts-ts," it said.

"What is it you want?" The animal seemed to be offering Abe its front paw, but Abe did not like this at all. "What?" he said, somewhat sharply.

"Knife," barked the animal, and dropped something whitish, like a beads, from its paw. But they were not beads as they rolled across the sand.

"A-abe," stammered Li. "Don't leave me here!"

By now, Mister Abe was no longer afraid. "Get out of the way," he said, waving the bathing gown at the animals. The animals made a sudden and hasty retreat. It would now be possible for Abe to withdraw with honour, but so that Li would see what courage he had he stooped down to pick up the white things the animal had dropped from its paw and see what they were. There were three of them, hard, smooth and round and with a dull sheen to them. As it was getting dark, Mister Abe brought them up close to his eyes.

"A-abe," wailed his abandoned sweetheart, "Abe!"

"I'm coming," Mister Abe called back. "Li, I've got something here for you! Li, Li, I'll bring it right over!" With the bathing gown whirling above his head, Mister Abe Loeb ran across along the shore like a young god.

Li was squatting a little way off and shaking. "Abe," she sobbed as her teeth chattered. "How could you,...how could you..." The triumphant Abe knelt down in front of her.

"Lily Valley, the gods of the sea, the Tritons, come to pay you homage. I am to tell you that ever since Venus emerged from the foaming deep no artist has ever impressed them like you. As proof of their awe they send you this." Abe held out his hand. "Look, three pearls."

"Don't talk garbage, Abe," snorted his sweetheart, Li.

"Honest, Li. Take a look, they're genuine pearls!"

"Let me see them," she whined, and with trembling hands reached out to touch the whitish spheres. "Abe," she gasped, " they really are pearls! Did you find them in the sand?"

"But Li, Sweetheart, you don't just find pearls in the sand!"

"Yes you do," his sweetheart insisted. "You wash the sand off in a pan and there they are. Didn't I tell you there must be lots of pearls round here?"

"Pearls grow in kind of clams under the water," said Abe, almost sure of himself. "But listen, Li, it was the tritons, they brought them for you? They must have seen you while you were bathing. They wanted to give them to personally, but

you were so afraid..."

"But they're so ugly," exclaimed Li. "Abe these are wonderful pearls. I'm really fond of pearls!" (Now she's beautiful, said the critical voice. Kneeling here in the sand with the pearls on the palm of her hand...yes, beautiful, it has to be said.) "And those, those animals, did they really..."

"They're not animals, sweetheart. They're the gods of the sea, they're called tritons." This did not surprise his sweetheart in the slightest.

"Why, that's so nice of them. They really are very sweet. What do you think, Abe, do you think I ought to thank them in some way."

"Aren't you afraid of them any more?" Abe's sweetheart shuddered.

"Yes. Abe, please, get me out of here!"

"Well that means," said Abe, "we've got to get to our boat. Come with me and don't be afraid."

"But what if...what if they're standing in our way, Abe?" shuddered Li. "Couldn't you go out there to them on your own? But you can't leave me here all by myself!"

"I'll carry you in my arms," offered Mister Abe, the hero.

"That would be all right," his sweetheart sighed.

"But put your bathing gown on," grumbled Abe.

"Right away." Miss Li rearranged her famously golden hair with both hands. "I must look an awful mess! Abe, do you have any lipstick on you?" Abe lay the bathing gown over her shoulders.

"I think it's best just to go, Li!"

"But I'm afraid," gasped his sweetheart. Mister Abe took her up in his arms. Li thought she was as light as a cloud. Hell, she's heavier than you thought, isn't she, said the critical voice. And now you've got both hands full, haven't you; if

those animals do come at us, what then? "Can't you run any faster?" his sweetheart suggested.

"Sure," gasped Mister Abe, hardly able not to get his legs in a tangle. By this time it was getting dark very fast. Abe was getting closer to the broad semi-circle formed by the animals.

"Hurry Abe, faster, faster," whispered Li. The animals began to sway and gyrate the upper half of their bodies in their peculiar wave-like way. "Quick, Abe, hurry, faster," his sweetheart whined as she kicked her legs about hysterically and jaggling her silver-lacquered nails in Abe's neck.

"For Gods sake, Li, give it a rest," Abe muttered.

"Knife," came a barking voice from just beside them.

"Ts-ts-ts."

"Knife."

"Li."

"Knife."

"Knife."

"Knife."

"Li."

They had already got past the semi-circle of animals, and Abe felt he could run no further through the damp sand. "You can put me down, now," said his sweetheart, just as Abe's legs were about to give way. He wiped the sweat from his brow as he panted for breath.

"Get into the boat, quick," he ordered his sweetheart. The semi-circle of dark shapes had turned to face Li and was coming closer.

"Ts-ts-ts."

"Knife."

"Knife."

"Li."

But Li did not scream. Li did not run away in terror. Li raised her arms to the sky, the bathing gown slipped off her shoulders, and naked and with both hands she waved to the swaying forms, blowing kisses to them as she did. On her trembling lips there appeared something which could only be called a charming smile. "You're so sweet," she stuttered in her squeaky voice, and stretched her white hands out once again to the swaying shadows.

"Come and give me a hand, Li," Abe ordered somewhat sharply as he pushed the boat out into the water. Sweetheart Li picked up her bathing gown.

"Goodbye, my darlings!" There was a sound of splashing as the shadows made their way into the water. "So hurry up, Abe," hissed his sweetheart as she paddled out to the boat. "They've nearly reached us!" Mister Abe Loeb was making desperate exertions to get the boat out into the water when sweetheart Li stepped into it to add to the weight, still fluttering her hand about. "Go over to the other side, Abe, they can't see me."

"Knife."

"Ts-ts-ts."

"A-abe."

"Knife, ts, knife."

"Ts-ts."

"Knife!"

At last the boat was bobbing on the waves. Mister Abe clambered into it and leant with all his strength on the oars. One of the oars struck against something slippery.

Sweetheart Li made a deep sigh. "Aren't they so sweet? And wasn't I just perfect?" Mister Abe rowed out to the yacht with all the strength he had.

"Put your bathing gown on, Li," he replied somewhat drily.

"I think I was a great success," asserted Miss Li. "And those pearls, Abe, what do you think they're worth?" For a moment, Mister Abe stopped rowing.

"I think you needn't have shown so much of yourself, sweetheart." Miss Li felt slightly offended.

"Well what if I did? Anyone can see that you're not an artist, Abe Loeb. And now, if you don't mind, keep rowing; I'm getting cold in just this gown!"

Chapter 7

The Yacht in the Lagoon (continued)

On board the Gloria Pickford that evening there were no personal quarrels, but scientific theories were bandied noisily. Fred (loyally supported by Abe) judged that it must certainly have been some kind of lizard, whereas the captain decided on a mammal. There aren't any lizards in the sea, the captain insisted angrily; but the young men from the university gave him no credence; and lizards are somehow more of a sensation. Sweetheart Li contented herself with the belief that they were tritons, that they were so sweet, and it was altogether such a success; and (in the blue striped pyjamas that Abe liked so much) her eyes shone as she dreamt of pearls and of gods of the sea. Judy, of course, was convinced it was all just humbug and nonsense and that Li and Abe had thought the whole thing up. She made furious signs to Fred that he should just leave it. Abe thought that Li should have told them about how he, Abe, went fearlessly among these lizards to fetch her bathing gown; which is why he told them three times about how Li faced them down while he, Abe, pushed the boat out into the water, and he was about to tell them for a fourth time except that Fred and the captain were not listening as they argued passionately about lizards and mammals. (As if it even mattered what they were, thought Abe.) In the end Judy yawned and said she was going to bed; she looked meaningfully at Fred, but Fred had just remembered that before the Flood there were all sorts of strange and ancient lizards with names like diplosaurus and bigosaurus or something like that and I can assure you they walked on their hind legs; Fred had seen them himself in a strange picture in an educational book as big as this. An amazing book, and it's something you should see for yourself.

"Abe," came the voice of his sweetheart, Li. "I've got a fantastic idea for a film."

"What's that, Li?"

"It's something amazingly original. You see, our yacht has sunk and I'm the only survivor on this island. And I'd live there like a female Robinson Crusoe."

"And what would you do there?" objected the captain with some skepticism.

"Well I'd go swimming and that sort of thing," was sweetheart Li's simple reply. "And then these tritons from the sea would fall in love with me and they'd bring me lots and lots of pearls. You know, just like it really happened. It could even be a nature film or an educational film, don't you think? Something like Trader Horn."

"Li's right," declared Fred suddenly. "We ought to go down tomorrow evening and film these lizards."

"These mammals, you mean," the captain corrected him.

"Me, he means," said Li, "as I'm standing among these tritons."

"But wearing your bathing gown," Abe interjected.

"I would have my white bathing suit on," said Li. "And Greta would have to do my hair properly. Today I looked just awful."

"Who would do the filming?"

"Abe. So that he has something to do. And Judy would have to hold the lights if it's already getting dark."

"What about Fred?"

"Fred would be carrying a bow and arrow and have a wreath on his head, and then if the tritons want to carry me away he can stop them."

"Well thanks a lot," Fred grinned. "I think I'd rather have a revolver, though. I think the captain should be there, too." The captain's military moustache bristled.

"Don't you worry about a thing. I'll make sure I do everything that needs doing."

"Three members of the crew, sir. And properly armed, sir." Sweetheart Li lit up in charming astonishment.

"Do you really think it's that dangerous, captain?"

"I don't think anything, girl," the captain grumbled, "but I have my orders from

Mister Jesse Loeb--at least where Mister Abe is concerned." All the gentlemen threw themselves into a passionate discussion of all the details of the undertaking; Abe winked to his sweetheart, it was already time for her to go to bed. Li obediently went.

"You know, Abe," she said to him in her cabin "I think this is going to be a fantastic film!"

"It will be, my love," Mister Abe agreed as he tried to kiss her.

"Not tonight, Abe," said his love as she pushed him away. "You must understand that I really have to concentrate."

Miss Li continued to concentrate all the next day, causing a great deal of work for her poor maid, Greta. There were bath with essential salts and essences, washing her hair with Nurblood shampoo, massage, pedicure, manicure, hairdressing, ironing, trying on and alterations of clothes, and many other different kinds of preparation; even Judy was drawn into the bustle and did what she could do help Li. (At times of difficulty, women can be remarkably loyal to each other. Dressing is one such time.) While all this feverish rush was occupying Miss Li's cabin the gentlemen were fending for themselves, and with ash trays and glasses of strong drink on the table in front of them they worked out a strategic plan about who would stand where and who would take care of what if anything happened; and in the process the captain's dignity in the serious question of who would hold command was injured several times. In the afternoon the filming equipment was taken down to the shore of the lagoon, along with a small machine gun, a basket with food and cutlery, a shotgun, a gramophone and other military requisites; all of it perfectly concealed under palm leaves. The three armed members of the crew, with the captain in the function of commander in chief, were in position well before it began to get dark, and then an enormous basket containing a few small things Miss Lily Valley might need was taken to the shore. Then Fred came down with Miss Judy. And then the Sun began to set in all its tropical glory.

Meanwhile, Mister Abe was already tapping on the door of Miss Li's cabin for the tenth time. "Sweetheart, it really is time to go now!"

"I'm coming, I'm coming," his sweetheart's voice replied, "but please don't make

me nervous! I have to get myself ready, don't I?"

The captain had his eye on the situation. Out on of the bay he could see a long, glittering band where the waves of the sea met the smooth and level surface of the lagoon. It's as if there were some kind of weir or breakwater under the water there, he thought; it could be sand, or a coral reef, but it looks almost as if it were artificial. Strange place. Here and there on the peaceful surface of the lagoon a black head would appear and make its way to the shore. The captain pursed his lips and reached uneasily for his revolver. It would have been better, he thought, if the women had stayed on board the yacht. Judy began to shiver and held tightly onto Fred. He's so strong, she thought, God I love him so much!

Eventually the last boat set out from the yacht. It contained Miss Lily Valley in a white bathing suit and a diaphanous dressing gown, in which, clearly, she was to be thrown up from the sea like a castaway; it also contained Miss Greta and Mister Abe. "Can't you row any faster, Abe," his sweetheart reproached him. Mister Abe saw the black heads as they moved towards the shore and said nothing.

"Ts-ts."

"Ts."

Mister Abe pulled the boat up onto the sand and helped Li and Miss Greta out of it. "Hurry over to the camera, now," whispered the artist, "and when I say Now, start filming."

"But we won't be able to see anything," Abe objected.

"Then Judy will just have to put the lights on. Greta!"

While Mister Abe Loeb took up his place at the camera the artist positioned herself on the sand like a dying swan and Miss Greta adjusted the folds of her dressing gown. "Make sure they can see something of my legs," the artist whispered. "Is that it now? Okay, so move back! Abe, Now!"

Abe began turning the handle. "Judy, lights!" But no lights came on. Swaying shadows were emerging from the sea and coming closer to Li. Greta pushed her hand into her mouth so that she would not scream. "Li," called Mister Abe, "Li,

run!"

"Knife!"

"Ts-ts-ts."

"Li."

"Li."

"A-be!"

Somebody removed the safety catch on his revolver. "Don't shoot, damn it!" hissed the captain.

"Li," called Abe and stopped filming. "Judy, lights!"

Li slowly and languidly stood up and raised her hands to the sky. The flimsy dressing gown slid down off her shoulders, and there was Lily in all her whiteness, stretching her lovely arms above her head as castaways do when they recover from having fainted. Mister Abe began angrily to turn the handle. "For Gods sake, Judy, put the lights on!"

"Ts-ts-ts!"

"Knife."

"Knife."

"A-be!"

The swaying black shadows formed a ring around Li in all her whiteness. But wait, this was no longer a game. Li no longer had her arms stretched up above her head, she was pushing something away from herself and screaming, "Abe, Abe, one of them touched me!" Just then a blinding glare of lights came on, Abe was quickly turning the handle, Fred and the captain ran towards Li with their revolvers, and Li was crouching on the sand shrieking with horror. At the same time, the fierce light showed tens or hundreds of long dark shadows slipping into the sea as if fleeing from it. At the same time two divers threw a net over one of

the shadows as it fled. At the same time Greta fainted and fell to the ground like an empty sack. At the same time two or three shots rang out and caused large splashes in the sea, the two divers with the net were lying on something which twisted and coiled under them, and the light in the hands of Miss Judy went out.

The captain switched on his pocket torch. "Children, is everyone alright?"

"One of them touched my leg," wailed sweetheart Li. "Oh Fred, it was awful!" then Mister Abe ran up with his torch.

"Hey, that was great, Li," he declared enthusiastically, "but I wish Judy had put the lights on earlier"

"The wouldn't go on," exclaimed Judy. "They wouldn't go on, would they Fred."

"Judy was afraid," Fred apologised for her. "But she didn't do it on purpose, I swear, did you Judy." Judy felt insulted, but in the meantime the two divers had arrived, dragging behind them something in the net that was thrashing about like an enormous fish.

"So here it is, Captain. And it's alive."

"The damned brute squirted some kind of poison at us. My hands are covered in blisters. And it hurts like Hell."

"And it touched me as well," whined Miss Li. "Abe, put the lights on! I want to see if I've got any blisters."

"No, sweetheart, there's nothing there," Abe assured her; he was going to kiss the spot just above her knee, but his sweetheart was anxiously rubbing at it.

"It was so cold, brr," sweetheart Li complained.

"You dropped one of your pearls, ma'am," said one of the divers as he handed over the little ball he had picked up from the sand.

"Gee, look Abe," Miss Li squealed, "they brought more pearls for me! All of you come and look for the pearls! There must be lots of pearls round here that the poor animals brought for me! Aren't they sweet, Fred? Here's another one!"

"Here's one too!" The three pocket torches were pointed down to the ground.

"I've found one that's enormous!"

"That belongs to me!" shouted sweetheart Li.

"Fred," came the icy voice of Miss Judy.

"Be right with you," said Fred as he crawled about the sand on his knees.

"Fred, I want to go back to the ship!"

"Somebody'll take you there," Fred told her as he continued searching. "Hey, this is fun!" Li and the three men continued crawling about in the sand.

"I've got three pearls here," the captain declared.

"Show me, show me," squealed Li excitedly and, still on her knees, ran over to him. Just then, there was a sudden glare of magnesium light and the sound of the handle on the camera being turned.

"Now I've got you," declared Judy vengefully. "This is going to be a great shot for the papers. Americans look for pearls. Marine reptiles throw pearls to people." Fred sat down.

"Christ, Judy's right guys; we've got to tell the press about this!" Li sat down.

"Judy is so nice. Judy, take us again, only this time from the front!"

"That wouldn't do you any favors, honey," opined Judy.

"Listen," said Mister Abe, "we really ought to keep on searching. The tides coming in."

In the darkness, at the edge of the sea, a black and swaying shadow appeared. Li screamed: "There...there..." The three torches were turned in that direction. It was only Greta on her knees, looking for pearls in the dark.

On Li's lap was the captain's cap with twenty-one pearls in it. Abe poured the drinks and Judy played the gramophone. It was an idyllic, starry night with the

eternal sound of the sea.

""So what are we going to call it?" Fred insisted. " *Milwaukee industrialists daughter films prehistoric reptiles.* "

" *Primordial lizards praise youth and beauty,* " suggested Abe poetically.

" *SS Gloria Pickford discovers unknown species,* " the captain advised. Or " *The mystery of Tahuara Island.* "

"Those are just sub-titles," said Fred. "A title really to say more than that."

"How about: *Baseball Fred in struggle with monsters,* " Judy suggested. "Fred was fantastic when they came at him. I hope that came out all right on film!"

The captain cleared his throat. "Actually Miss Judy, I was the first on the scene, but we neednt talk about that. I think the title ought to have a scientific sound to it, sir. Something formal and ...well, scientific. *Anteliduvian fauna on Pacific island.*"

" Anteviludian," Fred corrected him. "No, wait, Anteduvidian. Hell, hows it supposed to go? Anteduvidual. Antedinivian. No, thats not it. We're going to have to think up some simpler title, something that anyone can say. Judys good at that sort of thing."

" Antediluvian," said Judy.

Fred twisted round to look at her. "Thats too long, Judy. It's longer than those monsters with the tails. A title needs to be shorter. But isn't Judy great? Captain, dont you think shes great?"

"She is," the captain agreed. "A remarkable girl."

"Quite right, Captain," acknowledged the young giant. "The captain is a great guy. Only, Anteviludian fauna is kinda dumb. Thats no kind of title for the papers. How about *Lovers on the Island of Pearls,* or something like that?"

" *Tritons shower the radiant Lily with pearls,* " shouted Abe. " *Worship from the Empire of Poseidon! The new Aphrodite!* "

"That's stupid," protested Fred. "There never were any tritons. That's been scientifically proven. And there was never any Aphrodite either, were there Judy. *Humans meet with ancient lizards! The noble captain attacks antediluvian monsters!* It needs to have some pazazz, this title!"

"Special edition," declared Abe. " *Film star attacked by sea monsters! Modern woman's sex appeal triumphs over primitive lizards! Primordial reptiles prefer blondes!* "

"Abe," sweetheart Li interrupted. "I have an idea."

"What sort of idea?"

"An idea for a film. It'll be just fantastic, Abe. Just imagine, I'd be bathing in the sea..."

"That blouse really suits you, Li," Abe interjected.

"What? And these tritons would fall in love with me and take me away to the bottom of the sea. And I would be their queen."

"At the bottom of the sea?"

"That's right, under the water. In their secret kingdom, see, where they have cities and everything."

"But sweetheart, at the bottom of the sea you'd drown!"

"Don't worry about that, I can swim," said his sweetheart innocently. "So once every day I'd swim up to the shore and breathe some air." Li demonstrated her breathing exercises, which involved raising her chest and moving her arms as if swimming. "Like that, see? And on the shore someone, like a young fisherman maybe, would fall in love with me and I'd fall in love with him. Wouldn't that be great?" said sweetheart Li with a sigh. "And he would be so handsome and strong, and these tritons would want to drown him, but I would save him and go with him back to where he lives and the tritons would discover us there and then...and then maybe you could all come along and save us."

"Li," said Fred seriously, "that is so dumb that I swear they even *could* make a

film of it. I'll be surprised if old Jesse doesn't make a great film out of it."

Fred was right; Jesse Loeb Pictures did, later on, produce a great film with Miss Lily Valley in the leading role; it also had six hundred nayads, one Neptune and twelve thousand extras dressed as various kinds of underwater lizard. But before the film was completed a lot of water had flowed away and many incidents took place, such as:

1. The animal they had captured and kept in Miss Lily's bathtub attracted the lively attention of everyone for two days; by the third day it had stopped moving and Miss Li insisted it was just shy, poor thing; by the third day it had begun to stink and had to be thrown away in an advanced state of decay.

2. Only two pieces of film shot at the lagoon were any use. On one of them sweetheart Li was crouching in terror, waving her arms desperately at one of the animals standing nearby. Everyone agreed it was a great shot. The second showed three men and one girl kneeling down with their noses close to the ground; all of them were seen from the rear and it looked as if they were bowing down to something. This piece of film was suppressed.

3. Almost all the titles suggested for the newspapers were used (even the ones about the antediluvian fauna) in hundreds and hundreds of journals, weeklies and magazines in America and all round the world. They were accompanied with full and detailed accounts of what had happened and many photographs, such as the one of sweetheart Li among the lizards, the one of a single lizard in the bathtub, the one of Li by herself in her bathing suit, photographs of Miss Judy, Mister Abe Loeb, Baseball Fred, the captain of the yacht, the yacht itself, the island of Taraiva and a large number of pearls displayed on black velvet. In this way the career of sweetheart Li was assured; she even refused to appear in music hall and declared to journalists that she would devote herself to her Art.

4. There were of course those claiming specialist knowledge who asserted, as far as could be judged from the photographs, that these were not primaevial lizards at all but some kind of newt. Those with even more specialist knowledge asserted that this species of newt was not known to science and therefore did not exist. There was a long debate in the press about this which came to an end when professor J. W. Hopkins (Yale University) announced that he had examined the photographs available and considered them to be a hoax or a montage; that the

species shown seemed to resemble the great covered-gill newt (*Cryptobranchus japonicus*, *Sieboldia maxima*, *Tritomegas Sieboldii* or *Megalobatrachus Sieboldii*), but done in a way that was inaccurate, inartistic and downright dilletante. In this way the matter remained scientifically settled for a long period.

5. After a suitable time had elapsed, Mister Abe Loeb eventually married Miss Judy. His closest friend, Baseball Fred, was best man in a wedding performed with great celebration and the participation of a wide range of outstanding personalities in politics, art and other fields.

Chapter 8

Andrias Scheuchzeri

The inquisitiveness of man is boundless. It was not enough that Professor J. W. Hopkins (Yale University), the greatest authority of the day in the field of herpatology, had declared these mysterious creatures to be unscientific humbug and mere fantasy; both the specialist and the general press began to report frequent discoveries of these previously unknown animals, resembling giant newts, in all parts of the Pacific Ocean. Relatively reliable reports came from the Solomon Isles, Schoutoen Island, Kapingamarang, Butarit and Tapeteuea, and then further reports came from entire archipelagoes: Nudufetau, Fanufuti, Nukonono and Fukaofu, and then from Kiau, Uahuka, Uapu and Pukapuka. Rumours about Captain van Toch's demons and Miss Lily's tritons circulated around Melanesia and Polynesia respectively; and the papers judged there must be various kinds of underwater and prehistoric monsters, especially as the summer had begun and there was nothing else to write about. The underwater monsters were especially successful among their readers and tritons became the height of fashion in the USA that season; a spectacular revue called Poseidon was performed three hundred times in New York with three hundred of the most beautiful tritonesses and syrens; on the beaches of Miami and California young people bathed in costumes of tritons and nayads (ie. three strings of pearls and nothing else), while in the states of the midwest the Movement for the Suppression of Immorality gained enormously in numbers; there were public demonstrations and several negroes were hanged or burned alive.

Eventually the National Geographic Magazine published a special edition covering the scientific expeditions of Columbia University (instigated by J.S. Tincker, otherwise known as the Tin-can King). The reports were endorsed by P. L. Smith, W. Kleinschmidt, Charles Kovar, Louis Forgeron and D. Herrero , which covered all the worlds' authorities in the disciplines of fish parasites, ringworm, botany, infusoria and aphids. Their extensive coverage included:

...On the island of Rakahanga the expedition first encountered prints left by the rear legs of a hitherto unknown species of newt. The prints show five toes, between three and four centimetres long. The number of prints left shows that

the coast around the island must have been swarming with these newts. There were no prints of front legs (apart from one set of four, clearly left by a juvenile), showing clearly that these newts move about on their rear limbs.

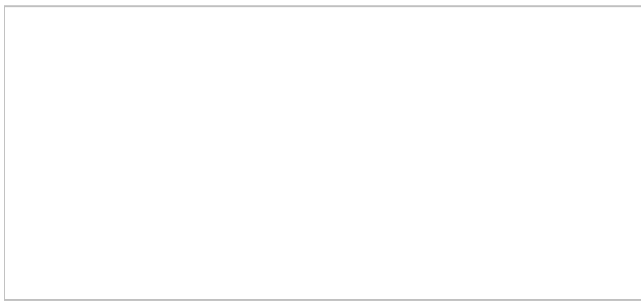
...It is worth mentioning that there is neither river nor marshland on the island of Rakahanga; this indicates that these newts live in the sea and are most likely the only representatives of that order living in a pelagic environment. It is well known, of course, that the Mexican axolotl (*Amblystoma mexicanum*) lives in salt lakes, but not even the classic work of W. Korngold, *Caudate Amphibians* (Urodela), Berlin, 1913, makes any mention of newts living in the sea.

...We waited until into the afternoon in order that we might catch, or at least catch sight of, a live specimen, but in vain. With some regret, we left the island of Rakahanga, where D. Herrer had been successful in finding a beautiful new species of lizard heperoptera. We met with much greater success, however, on the island of Tongarewa. We waited on the foreshore with our guns in our hands. Soon after sunset, the head of a newt emerged from the water, relatively large and slightly flattened. After a short while the newts climbed out onto the sand, swaying as they walked on their hind legs but nonetheless quite agile. When sitting they were just over three feet in height. They sat around in a wide circle and began making distinctive and vigorous circling movements of the upper parts of their bodies, giving the impression that they were dancing. W. Kleinschmidt stood up in order to obtain a better view. At this, the newts turned to look at him and soon were entirely stiff and motionless; they then began with remarkable speed to approach him, uttering sibilant barking sounds. When they were about seven paces away we opened fire on them. They fled, very quickly, and threw themselves into the sea; they were not seen again that evening. On the shore, there remained no more than two dead newts and one newt with a broken spine, uttering an odd sound, something like ogod, ogod, ogod. It then expired after W. Kleinschmidt used a knife to open its pulmonary cavity...

(There followed a series of anatomical details which we laymen would be unable to understand; readers with specialist knowledge are referred to the bulletin cited.)

The above indicators make it clear that this was a typical member of the order of caudate amphibians (urodela) which, as is widely known, includes the salamander genus (*salamandridae*), comprising the family of spotted

salamanders (tritons) and newts (salamandrae), and the family of tadpole spawning newts (ichthyoidea), made up of the pseudo-gilled newts (cryptobranchiata) and the gilled newts (phanerobranchiata). The newt found on the island of Tongarewa seems to be most closely related to the tadpole spawning pseudo-gilled newts; in many respects, including its size, it is reminiscent of the great Japanese newt (megalobatrachus sieboldii) or the American hellbender, better known as the mud devil, but it does distinguish itself from these species by its well developed sensors and the greater length and strength of its limbs which enable it to move with some facility both in water and on land. (There followed further details of comparative anatomy).



Andrias Scheuchzeri

After we had prepared the skeletons of the animals killed we made a very interesting observation: the skeleton of these newts is almost identical with the fossil remains of a newt's skeleton found by Dr. Johannes Jakob Scheuchzer in the Ä–hningen Fault and described by him in his "Homo Diluvii Testis", published in 1726. Readers less familiar with his work are reminded that the above mentioned Dr. Scheuchzer regarded this fossil as the remains of a human being from before the Flood. "Members of the educated World," he writes, "will see from the accompanying Woodcut that there is no Doubt whatsoever that we are dealing with a Man who was Witness to the Great Flood; there is no Feature that does not make ample Display of what could only be a Feature of Mankind, for it does everywhere conform with all the individual Parts of the Skeleton of Man in all its Dimensions. It is a Man made of Stone and shown from the Front; it is a Memorial of Man in a Form now extinct, older than all the Tombs of the Romans, Greeks or even Egyptians or any other People of the East." At a later date, Cuvier recognised the Ä–hningen fossil skeleton as that of a newt, known as Cryptobranchus Primaevus or Andrias Scheuchzeri Tschudi and long since considered extinct. By means of osteological comparisons we were able to

identify this newt as the primitive and supposedly extinct newt, *Andrias*. The mysterious ancient reptile, as the newspapers described it, is nothing other than the newt with covered gills known from the fossil record as *Andrias Scheuchzeri*; or if a new name is needed *Cryptobranchus Tinckeri Erectus* or the Polynesian Great Newt.

...The question as to why this interesting giant newt has hitherto escaped scientific attention remains a mystery, especially considering the large numbers in which it is found on the islands of Rakahanga and Tongarewa in the Manihiki archipelago. Neither Randolph nor Montgomery make mention of it in their publication *Two Years in the Manihiki Islands* (1885). The local inhabitants insist that this animal--which they also consider to be poisonous--began to appear no more than six or eight years ago. They say that these sea demons are capable of speech (!), and that in the bays where they live they construct entire systems of weirs and sea-walls in a way that resembles underwater cities; that the water in their bays remains as still as a mill pond throughout the entire year; that they excavate dens and passages in the ground under the water which are many meters long and in which they remain during the day; that at night they come out into the fields to steal sweet potatoes and yams and take hoes and pickaxes and other tools from the human population. The native people have developed a strong aversion to the newts and even live somewhat in fear of them; many of them have preferred to move away to other areas. It is clear that this is nothing more than primitive legends and superstitions resulting from the revolting appearance and upright stance and gait, somewhat resembling the walk of a human being, of these harmless giant newts.

...Travellers tales, according to which these newts are also to be found on other islands than Manihiki, should be taken with extreme caution. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the fresh footprints found on the shore of the island of Tongatabu and published by Captain Croisset in *La Nature* are those of *Andrias Scheuchzer*. This finding is of especial importance given that they form a connection between their appearance on the Manihiki Islands with Australasia, where so many vestiges of the development of ancient fauna have been preserved; let us bear in mind in particular the antediluvian lizard *hateri* or *tuatara*, which survives to this day on Stephen Island. These islands are mostly sparsely inhabited and hardly touched by civilization, and it is possible that isolated remains of species elsewhere extinct may have continued to survive

there. Thanks to the efforts of Mister J.S. Tincker, an antediluvian newt has now been added to the ancient lizard, *hateri*. If the good Dr. Johannes Jakob Scheuchzer were alive today he would see the resurrection of his Adam of Ä–hningen...

This learned bulletin would certainly have been sufficient to satisfy scientific curiosity about the mysterious sea monsters that were being talked about so much. Unfortunately though, the Dutch researcher, van Hogenhouck, published a report at the same time in which he classified these covered-gilled giant newts in the order of proper newts or tritons under the name of *megatriton molucccanus* and established that they were distributed throughout the Dutch-Sundanese islands of Jilolo, Morotai and Ceram; there was also a report by the French scientist Dr. Mignard who saw them as typical salamanders and concluded that they had originated in the French islands of Takaroa, Rangiroa and Raroia, calling them simply *cryptobranchus salamandroides*; there was also a report from H.W. Spence in which he claimed to have recognised a new order of *pelagidae*, native to the Gilbert Isles, which could be classified under the species name of *pelagotriton spencei*. Mr. Spence succeeded in transporting a live specimen to London Zoo, where it became the subject of further research and was given the names *pelagobatrachus hookeri*, *salamandrops maritimus*, *abbranchus giganteus*, *amphiuma gigas* and many others. Many scientists insisted that *pelagotriton spencei* was the same as *cryptobranchus tinckeri* or that Mignards salamander was no other than *andrias scheuchzeri*; there were many disputes about priority and other purely scientific questions. So it was that in the end every nation had its own giant newts and furiously and scientifically criticised the newts of other nations. That is why there never was any scientifically agreed opinion about the whole great matter of the newts.

Chapter 9

Andrew Scheuchzer

One Thursday afternoon, when London zoo was closed to the public, Mister Thomas Greggs, who was in charge of the lizard pavillion, was cleaning out the tanks and terraria. He was entirely alone in the newt section where the great Japanese newt, the American hellbender, Andrias Scheuchzeri and a number of small amphibians, axolotls, eels, reptiles and frogs were exhibited. Mister Greggs went round with his duster and his broom, singing *Annie Laurie* as he went; when suddenly a rasping voice behind him said: "Look Mum."

Mister Thomas Greggs looked round, but there was nobody there; there was just the hellbender slopping around in its mud and that big black newt, that Andrias, which was leant up against the edge of the tank with its front paws and twisting its body round. Must have imagined it, thought Mister Greggs, and continued to sweep the floor till it shone.

"Look, a newt," he heard from behind him. Mister Greggs turned quickly round; that black newt, that Andrias, was watching him, blinking with its lower eyelids.

"Ugh, it's ugly, isn't it," the newt said suddenly. "Dont get too close to it, love." Mister Greggs opened his mouth in astonishment.

"What?"

"You sure it doesnt bite?" the newt rasped.

"You ...you can speak!" Mister Greggs stammered, unable to believe his ears.

"Im scared of that one," the newt exclaimed. "What does it eat, Mum?"

"Say Good afternoon," said the astonished Mister Greggs. The newt twisted its body round. "Good afternoon," it rasped. "Good afternoon. Good afternoon. Can I give it a cake?" In some confusion, Mister Greggs reached into his pocket and drew out a piece of bread.

"Here you are, then"

The newt took the lump of bread into its paw and tried a piece of it. "Look, a newt," it muttered contentedly. "Dad, why is it so black?" Suddenly the newt dived back into the water and just its head re-emerged. "Whys it in the water? Why? Ooh, it's not very nice!"

Mister Thomas Greggs scratched the back of his neck in surprise. Oh, it's just repeating what it's heard people saying. "Say Greggs," he tried.

"Say Greggs," the newt repeated.

"Mister Thomas Greggs."

"Mister Thomas Greggs."

"Good afternoon."

"Good afternoon. Good afternoon. Good afternoon." The newt seemed able to continue talking without getting tired of it; but by now Greggs did not know what he could say; Mister Thomas Greggs was not a talkative man.

"Shut your mouth for now," he said, "and then when Im ready I'll teach you how to talk."

"Shut your mouth for now," gurgled the newt. "Good afternoon. Look, a newt. I'll teach you how to talk."

The management of the zoo, however, did not look kindly on it when its zookeepers taught the animals tricks; with the elephant it was different, but the other animals were there for educational purposes and not to be presented like in a circus. Mister Greggs therefore kept a secret of the time he spent in the newt pavilion, and was there after all the other people had left, and as he was a widower nobody was curious about his being there by himself. Everyone has his own taste. And not many people went to the newt pavilion anyway; the crocodiles were popular with everyone but Andrias Scheuchzeri spent his days in relative solitude.

One day, when it was getting dark and the pavilions were closing, the director of

the zoo, Sir Charles Wiggam, was wandering round the different sections just to see that everything was in order. As he went past the newt pavilion there was a splash in one of the tanks and a rasping voice said, "Good evening".

"Good evening," the director answered, somewhat surprised. "Whos there?"

"I beg your pardon," the rasping voice said, "I thought it was Mister Greggs."

"Whos there?" the director repeated.

"Andy. Andrew Scheuchzer." Sir Charles went closer to the tank. All he saw was one newt sitting upright and immobile.

"Who said that?"

"Andy," said the newt. "Who are you?"

"Wiggam," exclaimed Sir Charles in astonishment.

"Pleased to meet you," said Andrias politely. "How do you do?"

"Damn it all!" Sir Charles roared. "Greggs! Hey, Greggs!" The newt flipped quickly away and hid in the water. Mister Thomas Greggs hurried in through the door, out of breath and somewhat uneasy.

"How can I help you, sir?"

"Greggs, what's the meaning of this?" Sir Charles began.

"Has something happened, sir?" stammered Mister Greggs, rather unsure of himself.

"This animal is speaking!"

"I do beg your pardon, sir," replied Mister Greggs contritely. "You're not to do that, Andy. I've told you a thousand times you're not to bother the people with all your talk. I am sorry, sir, it won't happen again."

"Is it you that's taught this newt to speak?"

"Well it was him what started it, sir," Greggs defended himself.

"I hope it won't happen again, Greggs," said Sir Charles severely. "I'll be keeping an eye on you."

Some time after this incident, Sir Charles was sitting with Professor Petrov and talking about so-called animal intelligence, conditioned responses, and about how the popular view will over estimate how much an animal is capable of understanding. Professor Petrov expressed his doubts about Elberfeld's horses who, it was said, could not only count but also work out squares and square roots; after all, not even a normal educated man can work out square roots, said the great scientist. Sir Charles thought of Greggs talking newt. "I have a newt here," he began hesitantly, "that famous andrias scheuchzer it is, and it has learned to talk like a parrot."

"Out of the question," said the scientist. "Newts don't have the right sort of tongue."

"Then come and have a look," said Sir Charles. "It's cleaning day today, so there won't be too many people there." And out they went.

At the entrance to the newt pavillion sir Charles stopped. From inside could be heard the scraping of a broom and a monotonous voice saying something very slowly.

"Wait," Sir Charles whispered.

"Is there life of Mars?" the monotonous voice said. "Shall I read it?"

"No, read us something else, Andy," another voice answered.

"Who's to win this years Derby; Pelham Beauty or Gobernador?"

"Pelham Beauty," the second voice replied. "But read it anyway."

Sir Charles opened the door very quietly. Mister Thomas Greggs was sweeping the floor; and in the tank of sea water sat Andrias Scheuchzeri, slowly, word by word in a rasping voice, reading out the evening paper which he held in his front paws. "Greggs," shouted Sir Charles. The newt flipped over backwards and

disappeared under the water. Mister Greggs was startled and dropped his broom.

"Yes sir?"

"What is the meaning of this?"

"Please forgive me, sir," stuttered the unfortunate Greggs. "Andy always reads to me when I'm doing the sweeping. And then when he's sweeping it's me what reads to him."

"And who taught him to do that?"

"He worked it out for himself, sir. I...I just gave him my paper so that he wouldn't keep talking all the time. He was always talking, sir. So I just thought he could at least learn how to talk proper..."

"Andy," called Sir Charles. A black head emerged from the water.

"Yes sir," it rasped.

"Professor Petrov has come to look at you."

"Glad to meet you Professor. I'm Andy Scheuchzer."

"How do you know your name is Andrias Scheuchzeri?"

"Well it's written down here, sir. Andreas Scheuchzer. Gilbert Islands."

"And do you often read the newspaper?"

"Oh yes sir. Every day."

"And what parts do you most like to read?"

"Court cases, horse racing, football,..."

"Have you ever seen a football match?"

"No sir."

"Or a horse race?"

"No sir."

"Then why do you read it?"

"Cause it's in the paper, sir."

"Do you have no interest in politics?"

"No sir. Is there going to be a war?"

"Nobody can tell you that, Andy."

"Germanys building a new type of submarine," said Andy anxiously. "Death rays can turn a whole continent to dust."

"That's what you've read in the paper, is it?" asked Sir Charles.

"Yes sir. Who's going to win this years Derby; Pelham Beauty or Gobernador?"

"What do you think, Andy?"

"I think Gobernador, sir; but Mister Greggs thinks Pelham Beauty." Andy nodded his head. "Always buy English products. Snider's braces are the best. Do you have the new six-cylinder Tancred Junior yet? Fast, economic and elegant."

"Thank you, Andy. That will be enough now."

"Who's your favourite film star?" The hair of Professor Petrov's head and moustache bristled.

"Excuse me, Sir Charles," he complained, "I really have to go now."

"Very well, lets go. Andy, would you mind if some very learned gentlemen came to see you? I think they would be very glad to talk to you."

"I shall look forward to it, sir," the newt rasped. "Goodbye Sir Charles. Goodbye Professor."

The professor ran from the pavillion snorting and gasping in amazement. "Forgive me, Sir Charles," he said at last, "but could you not show me an animal that does not read the newspapers?"

The three learned gentlemen turned out to be Sir Bertram, D.M., Professor Ebbigham, Sir Oliver Dodge, Julian Foxley and others. The following is part of the record of the experiment with Andrias Scheuchzeri.

What is your name?

Answer: Andrezu Scheuchzer

How old are you?

A.: I don't know. If you want to look younger, wear the Libella corset.

What is the date today?

A.: Monday. It's nice weather today. Gibraltar is running in the Epsom this Saturday.

What is three times five?

A.: Why?

Are you able to count?

A.: Oh yes. What is seventeen times twenty-nine?

Leave us to ask the questions, Andrew. Name some English rivers for us.

A.: The Thames...

What else?

A.: Thames.

You don't know any others, do you. Who governs England?

A.: King George. God bless him.

Very good Andy. Who is the greatest English writer?

A.: Kipling.

Splendid. Have you read anything by him?

A.: No. How do you like Mae West?

It's better if we ask the questions, Andy. What do you know of English history?

A.: Henry VIII.

And what do you know about him?

A.: The best film in recent years. Fantastic costumes. A great show.

Have you seen it?

A.: I haven't. Get to know England: Buy yourself a Ford Baby.

What would you most like to see, Andy?

A.: The Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race.

How many continents are there?

A.: Five.

Very good. And what are they called.

A.: England, and the other ones.

What are the other ones called?

A.: There are the Bolsheviks and the Germans. And Italy.

Where are the Gilbert Islands?

A.: In England. England will not lay a hand on the continent. England needs ten thousand aeroplanes. Visit the English south coast.

May we have a look at your tongue, Andy?

A.: Yes sir. Clean your teeth with Flit toothpaste: it's economic, it's the best and it's English. For sweet smelling breath, use Flit toothpaste.

Thank you, Andy, that will be enough. And now, Andy, tell us ...

And so on. The transcript of the conversation with Andrias Scheuchzeri covered sixteen pages and was published in *Natural Science*. At the end of the transcript the committee of specialists summarised its findings thus: 1. *Andrias Scheuchzeri, a newt kept in London Zoo, is capable of speech, albeit it in a somewhat rasping voice; it has around four hundred words at its disposal; it says only what it has already heard or read. There is, of course, no question of any independent thought. Its tongue is quite mobile; under the circumstances we were unable to examine the vocal cords any closer.*

2. *The newt is also able to read, although only the evening paper. It takes an interest in the same subjects as the average Englishman and reacts to them in a similar way, ie. with fixed and generally accepted views. Its spiritual life--if it is possible to speak of such a thing--remains in conformity with the conceptions and opinions of our times.*

3. *Its intelligence should not be over-estimated, as it in no way surpasses that of the average modern man.*

Despite this sober assessment by the committee of specialists, the Talking Newt became the sensation of London Zoo. Andy was the darling of the crowds that surrounded him and wanted to talk to him on every possible subject, starting with the weather and finishing with the economic crisis and the political situation. At the same time he was given so much chocolate and sweets by his visitors that he became seriously ill in his gastro-intestinal tract. In the end the newt section had to be closed down, but it was already too late; Andrias Scheuchzeri, known as Andy, died as a result of his popularity, showing that even newts can be corrupted by fame.

Chapter 10

Town Carnival in Nové Strašací

Mister Povondra, the butler in the Bondy household, was spending this holiday in his native town. There was to be a carnival the following day; and when Mister Povondra went out he led his eight year old son, Frank, by the hand. The whole of Nové Strašací was filled with the scent of cakes and pastries and across the street were women and girls coming and going to the bakers with cakes. Two tents had already been set up on the square selling sweets and cakes and coffee, and a hardware dealer was there with his glass and porcelain, and a woman was shouting that she had embroidery and knitwear of every sort you could think of. And then there was a hut made of canvas covered in cloth on all sides. A lightly built man stood there on a ladder fixing on a sign at the top of it.

Mister Povondra stopped so that he could see what it said.

The thin man climbed down from his ladder and looked up contentedly at the sign he had just put up. And Mister Povondra, with some surprise, read:

CAPTAIN J. VAN TOCH and his performing newts

Mister Povondra thought of the big fat man with the captain's cap who he had once shown in to see Mister Bondy. And now look where he is, the poor man, thought Mister Povondra in sympathy; a captain he was, and now he's travelling about with some pitiful circus act! Such an impressive and healthy man he was! Maybe I should go in and see how he is, thought the compassionate Mister Povondra.

Meanwhile, the thin man had hung up a second sign at the entrance to the tent:

!! TALKING LIZARDS !!
!! THE GREATEST SCIENTIFIC SENSATION !!
Entrance 2 koruny.
Children (accompanied by parents) half price!

Mister Povondra hesitated. Two koruny and another koruna for the lad, that was not cheap. But Frank liked to learn things, and it would all be part of his education to learn about animals in other parts of the world. Mister Povondra was willing to sacrifice something for the boy's education, and so he walked up to the thin man. "Hello," he said, "I'd like to talk to Captain van Toch if that's alright." The little man's chest expanded in his stripey teeshirt.

"I'm Captain van Toch, sir."

"You're Captain van Toch?" answered Mister Povondra in surprise.

"Yes sir," said the little man, and showed him the anchor tattooed on his wrist." Mister Povondra blinked in surprise. How could the captain have shrunk down so small? Surely that's not possible.

"I am personally acquainted with Captain van Toch," he said. "My name is Povondra."

"Ah, that's different, then," said the little man. "But these newts really are Captain van Toch's. Guaranteed genuine Australian lizards. Come and have a look inside. Were just starting the main show now," he said as he lifted the sheet at the entrance.

"Come along, Frank," said Frank's father, and in they went. An exceptionally big and fat woman quickly sat down behind a little table. An odd couple they make, thought Mister Povondra as he paid his three koruny. Inside the tent there was nothing but a rather unpleasant smell and a tin bath.

"Where are the newts?" Mister Povondra asked.

"In that bathtub," yawned the enormous woman.

"Now, don't be afraid, Frank," said Mister Povondra, and he stepped up to the bath. In the water lay something black and immobile, about the size of a fully grown catfish; except that its head seemed to be slightly flat and the skin behind it swollen.

"That's the prehistoric newt they've been writing about in all the papers," said Mister Povondra to his son didactically, not letting the boy see his

disappointment. (Cheated again, he thought, but id better not let the boy see it. Three koruny down the drain!)

"Dad, why's it sitting in a tub of water?" Frank asked.

"Because that's where newts live, in water."

"And what do newts eat?"

"Fish and that sort of thing," suggested Mister Povondra to his son. (Well they had to eat something, he supposed.)

"And why's it so ugly?" Frank continued. Mister Povondra didn't know what to say to that; but at that moment the spindly little man came into the tent.

"Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen," he began in his cackling voice.

"Don't you have more than just one newt?" Mister Povondra asked accusingly. (If there were at least two of them we'd be more like getting our moneys worth.)

"The other one died," said the man. "This, ladies and gentlemen, is the famous Andrias, the rare and poisonous lizard from the islands of Australasia. In its native environment it grows to the size of a man and walks on two legs. Come on then," he said as he turned to the black and listless thing in the bathtub, jabbing at it with a stick. The black thing stirred itself and, with some effort, raised itself from the water. Frank recoiled a little but Mister Povondra held his hand tightly, don't be afraid, Daddy's here.

The newt stood on its hind legs and supported itself against the side of the tub with its front paws. The gills on the back of its head twitched spasmodically and it breathed with difficulty through its black snout. Its skin was too loose and covered in warts and bloody sores, its eyes were round like a frog's and it seemed in pain when it blinked with some kind of membrane from under the eye.

"As you see, ladies and gentlemen," the man continued in his cracked voice, "this is an animal that lives in water; which is why it is equipped with both gills and with lungs to breathe with when it comes out onto land. It has five toes, but only four fingers, but can nonetheless hold various items. Here." The animal

closed its fingers around the mans stick and held it in front of itself like a pitiful sceptre. "It can also tie knots in a piece of rope," the man declared as he took the stick away and gave the newt a piece of dirty rope. It held the rope in its hands for a moment and then did indeed tie a knot. "It can also play on a drum and dance," the man cackled as he gave the animal a children's drum and drumstick. The animal struck the drum a few times and twisted the upper half of its body round; then it dropped the stick into the water. "What d'ye do that for, vermin?" the man snarled as he fished the stick out. "And this animal," he declared, raising his voice back to its showman's level and clapping his hands, "is so intelligent and gifted that it is able to speak like a human being."

"Guten Morgen," the animal rasped, painfully blinking with its lower eyelids. "Good morning." Mister Povondra was startled, but it seemed to make no great impression on Frank.

"What do you say to our honoured public?" the man asked sharply.

"Welcome to our show," said the newt with a bow as his gills twitched round. "Willkommen. Benvenuti."

"Can you do arithmetic?"

"I can."

"How much is six times seven?"

"Forty-two," croaked the newt with some effort.

"There, you see Frank?" Franks father pointed out. "It can do arithmetic."

"Ladies and gentlemen," the skinny man crowed, "you are invited to ask questions of your own."

"Ask him something, Frank," Mister Povondra suggested. Frank squirmed.

"How much is eight times nine?" he finally shouted out; it clearly seemed to him to be one of the hardest questions possible. The newt thought for a while.

"Seventy-two."

"What's the day today?" Mister Povondra asked.

"Saturday," said the newt. Mister Povondra was very impressed.

"Just like a human being. What's the name of this town?" The newt opened its mouth and blinked.

"It's getting a bit tired now," the man interjected. "Now what do you say to the ladies and gentlemen?" The newt bowed.

"I am honoured. Thank you very much. Goodbye. Au revoir." And it quickly hid back in the water.

"That...that's a very remarkable animal," said Mister Povondra in wonderment; but three koruny was quite a high price to pay, so he added, "What else do you have to show the boy?" The skinny man was perplexed and pulled on his lower lip.

"That's all," he said. "I used to have some monkeys and all," he explained uncertainly, "but they were too much trouble. I could show you me wife if you like. The fattest woman in the world, she used to be. Mary, come over here!" Mary heaved herself onto her feet.

"What is it?"

"Let the gentlemen have a look at you." The fattest woman in the world put her head coquettishly to one side, raised one leg in front of her and lifted her skirt above the knee. This revealed her red knitted stocking which contained something pale and massive, like a leg of ham. "The upper part of the leg has a circumference of eighty-four centimetres," the desiccated little man explained, "only there's so much competition these days that Mary isn't the fattest woman in the world any more." Mister Povondra pulled his astonished Frank away.

"Glad to meet you," a voice rasped from the bathtub. "Do come again. Auf wiedersehen."

"What did you think of that, then, Frank?" Mister Povondra asked, once they were outside. "Did you learn something?"

"Yes Dad," said Frank. "Dad, why was that lady wearing red stockings?"

Chapter 11

The Anthroposauruses

It would certainly be an overstatement to say that nobody at that time ever spoke or wrote about anything but the talking newts. People also talked and wrote about other things such as the next war, the economic crisis, football, vitamins and fashion; but there was a lot written about the newts, and much of it was very ill-informed. This is why the outstanding scientist, Professor Vladimir Uher (University of Brno), wrote an article for the newspaper in which he pointed out that the putative ability of Andrias Scheuchzer to speak, which was really no more than the ability to repeat spoken words like a parrot, was of far less interest from a scientific point of view than some of the other questions surrounding this remarkable amphibian. For the scientist, the mysteries of Andrias Scheuchzeri were quite different: where, for instance, did it come from; where had it been throughout entire geological periods; how did it remain unknown for so long when reports of it now were coming in from all tropical parts of the Pacific Ocean. It seems to have been multiplying at an exceptional speed in recent times; how had it acquired such amazing vitality while still in a primitive triassic form, and how had it remained entirely hidden until recently, existing, most likely, in extremely isolated geographic pockets? Had there been a change of some sort in this ancient newt that brought biological advantages so that this rare vestige from the miocene period was given a new and remarkably effective period of existence? In this case it would not be out of the question for Andrias not only to multiply but even to evolve into a better form, and that human science would have the unique opportunity to assist in some of the enormous changes to be undergone by at least one animal species. The ability of Andrias Scheuchzeri to grunt a few dozen words and learn a few phrases--which the lay public perceives as a sign of some kind of intelligence--is no great wonder from a scientific point of view; but the power and vigour with which it shows its ability to survive, bringing it so suddenly and so successfully back to life after spending so long in abeyance, in a retarded state of development and nearly extinct, is no less than miraculous. There are some unusual circumstances to be considered here: Andrias Scheuchzeri is the only species of newt living in the sea and--even more remarkable--the only newt to be found in the area from Ethiopia to Australasia, the Lemuria of ancient myths. Could we not almost say

that Nature now wishes to add another form of animal to the world by a precipitate acceleration of the development of a single species, a species which she has so far neglected or has so far been unable to bring fully to life? Moreover: it would be odd if the giant newts of Japan and those of the Alleghan Islands did not have some connecting link in the regions of the ocean lying between them. If Andrias had not been found it would have been necessary to postulate its existence in the very places where it was found; it would simply be needed to fill the space where, according to the geographic and developmental context, it must have been since ancient times. Be that as it may, the learned professor's article concluded, this evolutionary resurrection of a miocene newt cannot fail to fill us all with as much reverence as astonishment at the Genius of Evolution on our planet which is clearly still far from ending its creative task.

This article was published despite the tacit, but definite, view of the editors that a learned article of this sort does not belong in a newspaper. Soon afterwards, Professor Uher received a letter from one of its readers:

Esteemed Professor Uher,

Last year I bought a house on the town square in ĀĀslav. While examining the house I found a box in the attic containing some rare and very old papers which were clearly of a scientific nature. They included two years' issues of HĀ½bel's journal, Hyllos for the years 1821 and 22, Jan Svatopluk Presl's Mammals, VojtĀch SedlĀĀek ZĀklad's Nature of Physics, nineteen years' issues of the general educational publication, Progress, and thirteen years' issues of the Czech Museum Magazine. Inserted next to Presls translation of Cuviers Discussion of Upheavals in the Earths Crust (from 1834) I found an article torn out of some old newspaper about some remarkable lizards.

When I read your distinguished article about these mysterious newts I was reminded of this box and brought it back down. I think it might be of some interest to you, and I am therefore, as an enthusiastic nature lover and great admirer of your works, sending its contents to you.

With deepest respects,

J. V. Najman

The cutting included with this letter bore neither title nor date; but the style and spelling suggest it came from the third or fourth decade of the nineteenth century; it was accordingly so yellow and decayed that it was very hard to read. Professor Uher was about to throw it into the bin but he was somehow impressed by the age of this piece of printed paper; he began to read; and after a short time he exclaimed "My God!" and readjusted his glasses. The cutting bore the following text:

Concerning Anthropoid Lizards

We read in one of the newspapers published overseas that a certain captain, the commander of an English man of war, having returned from a voyage to distant lands, has brought back reports concerning some rather remarkable lizards which he encountered on a minor island in the Australian ocean. On this island, we are told, there is to be found a salt water lake which has neither access to the open sea nor any other means of approach not involving great exertions and difficulties. It was this salt lake that the aforementioned captain and his medical officer had chosen for their recreation when from it emerged some unfamiliar animals. These animals greatly resembled lizards, their means of locomotion, however, was on two legs similar to human beings. In size they were comparable with a sea lion or seal, and once on shore they began to move around in their peculiar manner, giving the impression of a charming and elegant dance. The captain and his medical officer were successful in obtaining one of these animals by means of their guns and inform us that their bodies are of a slimy character, without hair and without anything resembling scales, so that they bear some resemblance to salamanders. The following day, when they returned to the same spot, they were obliged immediately to depart again because of the overpowering stench, and they instructed their divers to hunt all the newts in the lake with their nets, by which means all but a few of the animals were annihilated, leaving no more than two examples which were taken on board the ship. Upon establishing that their bodies contained some kind of poison and the skin was burning to the touch in a way that resembled the sting of a nettle, the

animals were placed in barrels of salt water in order that they might be returned to England alive. However, while the ship was near the island of Sumatra the captive lizards were successful in making their way from the barrels, opening without any assistance one of the windows of a lower deck, throwing themselves into the sea, and making their escape under cover of darkness. According to the testimony of officers and ratings on board the ship these animals were remarkably odd and sly, walking as they did on their hind legs, and issuing strange barking and squelching sounds. They seemed however to present no danger to man. It would seem appropriate from the preceding to give them the name 'anthroposaurus'.

So the cutting went. "My God!" repeated the professor in some excitement, "why is there no date or title on this cutting? And what was this foreign newspaper named by this certain commander and what English ship was this? What was the small island in the Australian Ocean? couldn't these people have been a bit more precise and a bit more, well, a bit more scientific? This is a historic document, it's priceless..."

A small island in the Australian Ocean, yes. A small salt water lake. It sounds like a coral island, an atoll with a salt lagoon, difficult of access: just the sort of place a prehistoric species of this sort might survive, isolated from the evolutionary developments of other species and undisturbed in a natural reservation. Of course they wouldn't have been able to multiply because of the lack of food in the lake. It's obvious, the professor said to himself. An animal similar to a lizard, but without scales and walking on its hind legs like a man: it could only be *Andrias Scheuchzeri*, or another newt closely related to it. Supposing it was the same *Andrias*. Supposing those damned divers in that lagoon wiped them out and just the one pair were taken alive onto that ship; a pair that escaped into the sea by Sumatra. That would mean right on the Equator, in conditions highly favourable for life and with unlimited food. Could it be that this change of environment gave this Miocene newt a powerful new evolutionary impulse? It was certainly used to salt water: let's suppose its new home was a calm, enclosed bay with plenty of food; what would happen then? The newts transposed into an environment with optimal conditions, having enormous vigour; their population would burgeon. That's it, the scientist declared joyfully. The newts would start to develop uncontrollably; they would throw themselves into life like mad; they would multiply at an amazing rate because their eggs and

their tadpoles would have no particular enemies in the new environment. They would colonise one island after another--it's only strange that some islands have been overlooked. In all other respects it's typical of migration patterns in pursuit of food--and that raises the question of why they didn't develop earlier. Could it be to do with the fact that there is no known species of newt in the area between Ethiopia and Australia? Or rather hasn't been until now. Could there have been some development in this area in the miocene period which was unfavourable for newts? It is certainly possible. Could there have been some particular predator which simply hunted the newts to extinction? Just on a single small island, with an isolated lake, is where the miocene newt survived-- albeit at the price of its evolution coming to a halt. It was like a compressed spring waiting to be released. It's not even out of the question that Nature had its own great plans for this newt, it might have developed even further and further, higher and higher, who knows how high...(At this thought, Professor Uher shuddered slightly; who knows that Andrias Scheuchzeri was not meant to be the human beings of the miocene!)

Enough of that! This undeveloped animal suddenly finds itself in a new environment offering boundless promise; a compressed spring waiting to be released. Andrias will have thrown itself into its development with so much miocene vigour and enthusiasm, so much Å©lan vital! So much frenzy to catch up on the thousands and millions of years during which evolution passed it by! Is it at all possible it would be content with just the level of development it has reached today? It would show just the sort of upsurge we have seen--or else it's just on the threshold of its evolution and getting ready to rise--and who can say where it will go! These were the thoughts and observation that Professor VladimÅr Uher wrote down about this yellowed cutting from an ancient publication, shaking with the intellectual enthusiasm of a discoverer. I must publish it in the newspapers, he said to himself, as nobody ever reads scientific publications. Let everyone know what enormous events Nature has in store for us! I will entitle it Do Newts have a Future?

Only, the editor of the *Peoples Press* looked at Professor Uher's article and shook his head. Not these newts again! I think our readers have had it up to their necks with these newts. It's about time we found something else to write about. And a scientific article such as this doesn't belong in the papers anyway.

As a result, the article about the development and prospects of the newts never

did appear.

Chapter 12

The Salamander-Syndicate

President G.H. Bondy rang the bell and stood up.

"Gentlemen," he began, "I have the honour of opening this extraordinary general meeting of the Pacific Export Company. I would like to welcome everyone here and thank them for the contribution they make."

"I also," he continued with some emotion, "have the sad duty of giving you some tragic news. Captain Jan van Toch is no longer with us. Our founder, if I can call him that, the father of the great idea of establishing commercial contact with thousands of islands in the far Pacific, our first captain and enthusiastic fellow worker has died. He passed away at the start of this year on board our ship, *Å Årka*, not far from Fanning Island after suffering a stroke while engaged in his duty." (Bet he made a Hell of a fuss, poor man, thought Mister Bondy fleetingly.) "Let us now all stand up in honour of this mans bright memory."

All present stood up with a scraping and clattering of chairs and then remained in formal silence, all of them united in the hope that this general meeting wouldn't last too long. (Poor Vantoch, my friend, thought G.H. Bondy with sincere emotion. What does he look like now? I expect they put him on a plank and threw him into the sea--what a splash that must have made! He was certainly a man of great honour, and had such blue eyes...)

"Thank you, gentlemen," he added briefly, "for showing such piety in memory of my personal friend, Captain van Toch. I now invite our director, Mister Volavka, to inform you of the economic prospects for PEC over the coming year. None of these figures are yet certain but I hope you won't expect them too have changed too much by the end of the year. Mister Volavka."

"Good afternoon," Mister Volavka began, and off he went. "The state of the pearl market is very unsatisfactory. Pearl production last year was nearly twelve times higher than in 1925, which itself was a very good year, but now the price of pearls has begun a catastrophic decline, by as much as sixty five percent. Management has decided, therefore, not to put any of this years pearl harvest on

the market and they will be kept in storage until demand has risen again. Unfortunately, pearls went out of fashion last autumn, clearly because they had sunk so low in price. Our Amsterdam branch has, at present, more than two hundred thousand pearls in stock which, for the time being, are next to impossible to sell.

"At the same time," Mister Volavka purred on, "there has been a marked reduction in the number of pearls found this year. Many fisheries have had to be abandoned because production was too low. Fisheries discovered just two or three years ago seem to be more or less exhausted. It is for this reason that the management had decided to turn its attention to other fruits of the sea such as coral and shellfish. There has been some success in stimulating the market for coral jewellery and other ornaments, but even here coral from Italy is achieving greater success than that from the Pacific. The management is also studying the possibility of intensive fishing in the deepest parts of the Pacific Ocean, where the main consideration is how to transport the fish from the Pacific to the European and American markets; results and findings so far are not very encouraging.

"On the other hand," the director went on, his voice rising slightly, "our relatively high turnover suggests it might be profitable to diversify into other activities such as the export of textiles, enamel ware, wireless sets and gloves to the Pacific islands. This business would be amenable to further development; although this year it is already showing a slight loss. there is of course no question of PEC paying any dividend to its shareholders at the end of the year; and the management would like to announce in advance that, on this occasion, it will renounce any commissions and bonuses..."

There was a painful silence in the room. (It must have been like this on Fanning Island, thought G.H. Bondy. He died a true sailor, Vantoch. A good man. It's a pity a decent chap like that had to die. And he wasn't even that old...he was no older than I am...) Dr. Hubka stood up to speak; and the minutes of the extraordinary general meeting of the Pacific Export Company continued thus:

Dr. Hubka asks whether the PEC might go into liquidation

G.H. Bondy replies that management has decided to wait for further suggestions in that matter.

Monsieur Louis Bonenfant urges that pearl production should have been done under the supervision of permanent representatives, continuously on site at fisheries, who would check whether pearls were being gathered with enough vigour and specialist skill.

Mr. Volavka, director, observes that this has been considered, but it was thought that this would result in excessive administration costs. There would need to be at least three hundred agents on the payroll; there was also the question of how these agents would themselves be supervised to ensure that all pearls found were passed on to the company.

M.H. Brinkelaer asks whether the newts can be relied on to pass on all the pearls found by them, and whether they do not dispose of them to somebody not connected with the company.

G.H. Bondy observes that this is the first time the newts have been mentioned in public. It has been a rule in this place, up till now, not to mention any details of how the gathering of pearls is carried out. He points out that it was for this reason that the inconspicuous title of Pacific Export Company chosen.

M.H. Brinkelaer asks whether it is unacceptable, in this place, to talk about matters which affect the interests of the company, and which moreover have long been known by the general public.

G.H. Bondy replies that it is not unacceptable, but it is unprecedented. He welcomes that fact that it is now possible to speak openly. In reply to Mister Brinkelaer's first question, he can state that as far as he knows there is no reason to doubt the total honesty of the newts and their willingness to work at gathering pearls and corals. We must however reckon on known pearl fisheries becoming effectively exhausted in the near future. Where new fisheries are concerned, it was on a journey to find islands which are so far unexploited that our unforgettable colleague, Captain van Toch, died. It has so far been found impossible to find another man with the same experience and the same unshakeable honesty and love for his work to replace him.

Colonel D.W. Bright fully acknowledges the services rendered by the late Captain van Toch. He points out, however, that the captain, whose loss we all regret, did show too much concern for the comfort of the aforementioned newts.

(Agreement) It was not necessary, for instance, to provide the newts with knives and other equipment of such high quality as the late van Toch did. There was no need, for instance, to give them so much food. There is scope for substantial reductions in the costs associated with the maintenance of the newts and in this way raise the net income of the company. (Lively applause)

Vice-president J. Gilbert agrees with Colonel Bright, but points out that that was not possible while Captain van Toch was still alive. Captain van Toch insisted that he had his personal obligations towards the newts. There were various reasons why it would have been inadvisable to even suggest neglecting the old man's wishes in this respect.

Kurt von Frisch asks whether the newts could not be employed in some other way that might be more profitable than pearl fishing. Their natural, one could say beaver-like, talent for building weirs and other underwater constructions should be taken into account. They could perhaps be put to use in deepening harbours, building piers and performing other technical tasks underwater.

G.H. Bondy states that management is actively engaged in this consideration; there are some great possibilities in this respect. He states that the company now owns nearly six million newts; if we consider that one pair of newts might have a hundred tadpoles in any given year the company could well have three hundred million newts at its disposal by this time next year; in ten years the number would be astronomical. G.H. Bondy asks what the company intends to do with this enormous number of newts, when the newt farms are already over-populated and, because of a lack of natural foodstuffs, it has been found necessary to feed the newts with copra, potatoes, maize and similar.

K. von Frisch asks whether the newts are edible.

J. Gilbert: not at all. Nor do their hides have any use.

M. Bonenfant asks management what they now intend to do.

G.H. Bondy (standing): "Gentlemen, we convened this extraordinary general meeting in order publicly to draw your attention to the extremely unfavourable prospects of our company which--I hope you will allow me to remind you of this--has proudly paid returns of twenty to twenty-three percent over recent years

as well as having well funded reserves and low costs. We stand now at a turning point; the way of doing business which has proved itself so well over recent years is now practically at an end; we have no choice but to find new ways." (Loud applause)

"I could even say it is a sign from fate that our excellent friend and captain, J. van Toch, left us just at this time. Our romantic, beautiful--I could even say absurd--trading in pearls was always closely connected with him. I consider this to be the closing chapter in our business; it had its, so to speak, exotic charm, but it was never suitable for modern times. Gentlemen, pearls could never be the concern of a large company which needs to be cohesive horizontally and vertically. For me personally, this affair with pearls was never more than a minor distraction." (Discomfiture) "Yes gentlemen; but a minor distraction which brought substantial profits to me and to you. At the start of our business these newts also had a kind of, shall I say, charm of the new. Three hundred million newts will not have much charm about them." (Laughter)

"I spoke earlier about finding new ways of moving forward. While my good friend, Captain van Toch, was still alive there was no question of giving our affairs any other character than that which could be called the Captain van Toch style." (Why not?) "Because, gentlemen, I have too much good taste to mix one style with another. I would say that the style of Captain van Toch was that of a romantic adventurer. It was the style of Jack London, Joseph Conrad and others of that ilk. Old-fashioned, exotic, colonial, almost heroic. I do not deny that he charmed me with this style of his, but since his death we no longer have the right to continue with an epic tale which is adventurous and juvenile. We have before us not a new chapter but a new conception, gentlemen, it is a job for an imagination which is new and fundamentally different." (You speak as if this were all just a story in a novel!) "Yes, gentlemen, you are quite right. I take an artists interest in business. Without a sense of art it is impossible ever to think of something new. We need to be poets if we are to keep the world moving." (Applause)

G.H. Bondy bows. "Gentlemen, I am sorry to be closing this chapter, the chapter we might call the van Toch era; an era in which we made use of the child-like and adventurous side that we all have. The time has come now to bring this fairy story of pearls and coral fisheries to an end. Sinbad is dead, gentlemen. And the question is, what now?" (Well that's just what were asking!) "Alright gentlemen:

please take out pen and paper and write this down. Six million. Have you got that down? Multiply that by fifty. That makes three hundred million, doesn't it. Multiply that by another fifty. Now that's fifteen thousand million, yes? And now gentlemen, please be so kind as to tell me what, in three years time, were going to do with fifteen thousand million newts. How are we to employ them, how are we going to feed them, and so on." (Let them die, then!) "Yes, but don't you think that would be a pity? Have you not thought that every new newt is a new business opportunity, a new unit of labour waiting to be put to use? Gentlemen, with six million newts we can still make business of some sort. With three hundred million it will be somewhat harder. But gentlemen, fifteen thousand million newts is something quite inconceivable. The newts will devour the company. That is how it is." (And you will be responsible! It was you who started all this business with the newts!)

G.H. Bondy raises his head. "And I fully accept that responsibility, gentlemen. Anyone who wishes to can dispose of his shares in the Pacific Export Company immediately. I am quite willing to pay for them..." (How much?) "Their full value." (Consternation. Chairman calls for ten minute pause)

After pause, H. Brinkelaer speaks. Expresses pleasure at high rate of increase of newts, and with it the rate of increase of company assets. But, gentlemen, it would of course be sheer madness to breed them without regard for the need; suggests on behalf of shareholders that if the company cannot find suitable work for them itself they should be simply sold as working force to whoever wishes to undertake any work on or under water. (Applause) The cost of feeding a newt is no more than a few centimes; if a pair of newts is sold for, say, a hundred francs, and the working life of a newt is no more than, say, one year, then any investor would see a very good return. (Signs of agreement)

J. Gilbert indicates that newts reach ages much higher than one year; we do not yet have enough experience with them to say how long they actually live.

H. Brinkelaer modifies his suggestion; the price of a pair of newts should be set at three hundred francs.

S. Weissberger asks what sort of work the newts are actually capable of.

Mr. Volavka, director: with their natural instincts and their exceptional technical

training, the newts would be especially suited to the construction of weirs, embankments and breakwaters, to the deepening of harbours and channels, clearing shallow waters and removal of sediments, and to freeing water channels; they could reinforce and maintain shorelines, extend sea defences, and so on. For work of this sort they would operate in groups of hundreds or thousands of individuals; in projects on this large a scale, where not even modern plant and machinery could be considered, there would be no other way of performing the task at such low cost. (Quite right! Excellent!)

DR. HUBKA objects that by selling newts that might find new places to reproduce the company might lose its monopoly on the animals. He suggests the newts be merely rented out to businesses engaged in water works as properly trained and qualified working units with the stipulation that any tadpoles created will continue to be the property of PEC.

Mr. Volavka, director, points out that it would not be possible to supervise millions or even thousands of millions of newts in the water, let alone their tadpoles; many newts have already been misappropriated for zoos and menageries.

Col. D.W. Bright: Only male newts should be sold or rented out so that they would not be able to reproduce outside the farms and incubators belonging to the company.

Mr. Volavka, director: It is not possible to assert that newt farms are the property of the company. A piece of the sea floor cannot be owned or rented. The question of who the newts belong to, if for instance they are living in the surface waters of Her Majesty the Queen of Holland, is very unclear, legally speaking, and could lead to many disputes. (Unease.) In most cases we don't even have any guaranteed fishing rights; in fact, gentlemen, we established our newt farms in the Pacific islands without any legal right to do so. (Growing unease.)

J. Gilbert, responding to Colonel Bright, says that experience so far showed that male newts kept in isolation become lethargic and unwilling to work; they are lazy, apathetic and often die from stress.

Von Frisch asks whether newts to be sold could not be castrated or sterilised beforehand.

J. Gilbert: That would incur too many costs; there simply is no way for us to prevent newts from procreating after they have been sold.

S. Weissberger, asks, as a member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, that if any newts are to be sold it should be done humanely and in a way that would not offend people's sensibilities.

J. Gilbert thanks him for raising the subject; it is understood that the newts would be caught and transported only by trained personnel under proper supervision. It is not, of course, possible to be sure how the newts will be treated by the businesses that buy them.

S. Weissberger declares that he is satisfied with the assurances given by Vice-President Gilbert. (Applause.)

G.H. Bondy: "Gentlemen, we have, from now on, to abandon any idea of having a monopoly on newts. Unfortunately, under current regulations, we are not able to take out a patent on them." (Laughter.) "We can and must do business with newts in a way that's fundamentally different from the way we have been up till now; and it is essential that our approach to business is fundamentally different and on a far bigger scale." (Hear hear!) "And there are many things, gentlemen, that need to be agreed beforehand. Management suggest the creation of a new, vertically organised trust under the name Salamander Syndicate. Besides our company, the members of the newt syndicate would consist of certain major companies and strong financial groups; there is one company, for instance, that would be engaged in manufacturing special, patented metal tools for the newts ..." (MEAS, you mean?) "Yes, that's right, MEAS is the company I have in mind. There will also be a cartel of companies in the field of chemicals and foodstuffs, manufacturing cheap, patented feed for the newts; there will be a group of transport companies, making use of experience already gained to patent special hygienic tanks for transporting the newts; a block of insurance companies to cover the newts against risk of death or injury during transportation or at the workplace; other interested concerns in the fields of industry, export and finance which, for legal reasons, we are not able to mention by name at this stage. Suffice it to say, gentlemen, that at the start of business the syndicate would have four hundred millions pounds sterling at its disposal." (Excitement) "This file, my friends, is already full of contracts and all they need now is a signature for the creation of one of the biggest commercial

organisations of modern times. All that is asked of you by the management, gentlemen is that you give them the authority to establish this gigantic concern whose task will be to cultivate and employ the newts in the best possible way." (Applause and voices of protest).

"Gentlemen, please bear in mind the advantages a collaboration of this sort could bring. The Newt Syndicate would provide more than just newts, it would also provide equipment and food for the newts such as maize, carbohydrates, beef fat and sugar for thousands of millions of well fed animals; then there would be transport, insurance, veterinary needs and everything at the lowest rate guaranteed for us if not by a monopoly then at least by being in a dominant position over any other potential rival that might want to deal in newts. Just let them try it, gentlemen; they won't be in competition with us for long." (Bravo!) "But that's not all. The Newt syndicate would provide all kinds of building material for underwater work performed by the newts; for this reason we have the support also of heavy industry, cement works, the stone and timber industries..." (You still don't know how the newts are going to work!) "Gentlemen, at this very moment there are twelve thousand newts at work in Saigon building new docks, basins and jetties." (You didn't tell us about that!) "No. This is our first large scale experiment, and it has been a complete success, meeting all our hopes and expectations. Without any hint of a doubt, the future belongs to newts." (Enthusiastic applause)

"And that's not all, gentlemen. There are still many more functions for the Newt Syndicate to perform. the salamander syndicate will seek out work for millions of newts all round the world. They will provide the plans and the ideas for subjugating the oceans. It will disseminate ideas of Utopia, dreams that are gigantic, projects for new coastlines and shipping lanes, causeways that will join continents, whole chains of artificial islands for journeys to new lands in the middle of the oceans. That is where the future of mankind lies. Gentlemen, four fifths of the Earths surface is covered by sea; there's no denying that that is too much; the surface of our world, the map of sea and land, must be corrected. We are giving the world the workers of the sea, gentlemen. Well no longer be doing it in the style of Captain van Toch with his adventurous tales of pearls and treasure but by the tried and tested means of honest toil. We can be mere shopkeepers or we can be more creative; but if we fail to think in terms of oceans and continents we won't have fulfilled our promise. Somebody earlier on

mentioned the difficulty of selling a pair of newts. I would rather we thought in terms of thousands of millions of newts, of millions and millions of workers, of moving the crust of the Earth itself, a new Genesis and a new geological age. We have today the chance to talk of a new Atlantis, of ancient continents extending further and further out into the seas, a new world created by man himself. Forgive me, gentlemen, if all this seems Utopian, but we are indeed stepping out into a Utopia. We have already entered in, my friends. All we need to do is work out what technical jobs need to be done by the newts ..." (And the economics!)

"Yes. The economics of all this are especially important. Gentlemen, our company is too small to be able to make use of thousands of millions of newts by itself; we don't have the money for it nor the influence. If the map of the seas and the land is to be changed we need also to have the greatest powers in the world taking an interest. But that can be left till later; there is still no need to name what high places have already shown positive interest in the syndicate. But for now, all I ask of you, gentlemen, is that you do not lose sight of the boundless scope of the affair you are about to vote on." (Enthusiastic and sustained applause. Excellent! Bravo!)

It was nonetheless necessary, before the vote was held, to promise that shares of the Pacific Export Company would pay a dividend of at least ten percent this year from its reserves. The vote was then eighty-seven percent in favour of the Newt Syndicate and only thirteen percent against. As a result the management's proposal was accepted. The Salamander Syndicate came into life. G.H. Bondy was congratulated.

"That was a very good speech, Mister Bondy," old Sigi Weissberger praised.
""Very good. And please, tell me, how did you get the idea?"

"How?" G.H. Bondy replied absent mindedly. "Actually, to tell you the truth Mister Weissberger, it was all because of old van Toch. He was always so fond of his newts--what would the poor man have said if we just let those tapa-boys of his die out or be killed?"

"Tapa-boys? What do you mean, tapa-boys?"

"All those vile newts. At least they'll be treated decently now that they're worth money. And we might as well use them to create a utopia as the horrors are no

good for anything else."

"I don't see what you mean," Mr. Weissberger said. "Have you ever actually seen one of the newts, Mr. Bondy? I don't really know what they're like. What do they look like?"

"I'm afraid I really can't tell you, Mr. Weissberger. How should I know what a newt looks like? Do you think I have the time to bother about what they look like? I'm just glad we've got the Newt Syndicate sorted out."

Supplementary Chapter

The sex life of the newts.

One of mans favourite activities is to imagine how the world might be in the distant future, what technical wonders will have been perfected, what social problems solved, how far science and civil organisation will have progressed, and so on. But however much improved, progressed or at least more technically perfect these utopias are, they never fail to take a lively interest in the question of how one of the most ancient of institutions might be. Sex, reproduction, love, marriage, family, the status of women and so on are as popular now as they have always been. Consider, in this respect, the works of Paul Adam, HG. Wells, Aldous Huxley and many others.

Taking his example from these authors, and considering that he has already begun to speculate of the future of our planet, the present author regards it as his duty to speculate on what the sexual behaviour of the newts will be. He will settle the matter now so that he will not have to return to it later. In its basic outlines, the sex life of Andrias Scheuchzeri is, of course, no different from that of other tailed amphibians; there is no copulation in the proper sense of the word, the female carries the ova through several stages of their development, the fertilised ova develop into tadpoles in the water and so on; this is something that can be found in any primer of biology. So let us refer then to just a few peculiarities which have been observed in Andrias Scheuchzeri.

According to the account given by H. Bolte, the male and female come together in early April; the male will usually remain with just one female throughout any one mating season, and for a period of several days will never leave her side. He will take no sustenance during this period, whereas the female will evince a voracious appetite. The male will pursue the female in the water and attempt to keep his head closely beside hers. If he is successful in this, then he will position his paw in front of her snout in order to prevent escape. He will then become stiff. In this way, with male and female in contact only at the head while their bodies form an angle of approximately thirty degrees, the two animals will float motionless side by side in the water. After a short time has elapsed, the male will begin to convulse with sufficient vigour for their two bodies to collide; after

which he will again become stiff, his limbs extended to each side, and touching only the head of his chosen mate with his paw. During this, the female shows a total indifference apart from eating whatever comes within range. This, if we may call it thus, kissing lasts several days; at times the female will pull herself away in pursuit of food, at which the male will pursue in a state of clear agitation if not fury. Eventually the female ceases to show further resistance or attempt to remove herself from the male and the couple will remain floating motionless, resembling a pair of black logs attached to each other in the water. The body of the male will then begin to undergo cramps and convulsions, during which he will discharge large amounts of somewhat sticky foam into the water, immediately after which he will abandon the female and climb away between the rocks and stones in a state of extreme exhaustion; during this period it is possible for the observer to cut off a leg or tail without his showing any kind of defensive reaction.

The female will remain for some time in her stiff and motionless posture; she will then show vigorous movement and discharge from her cloaca a chain of eggs inside a gelatinous covering, making frequent use of her rear limbs to assist this process in the way seen among toads. The eggs number between forty and fifty and hang from the female's body. She will swim with them to a safe place and attach them to seaweed, algae or simply to a rock. After a period of ten days, the female will bear another litter of twenty to thirty eggs without any union with the male having taken place; it seems clear that the eggs were fertilised within the cloaca. There will usually be a third and a fourth discharge of eggs after a period of seven or eight days, each of fifteen to twenty eggs variously fertilised. The feather-gilled tadpoles will emerge after a gestation period of between one and three weeks. The tadpoles grow into adult newts after just one year and are able to reproduce in their turn.

The behaviour observed by Miss Blanche Kistemaekers of two newts in captivity was somewhat different. At the time of spawning the male approached only one female and pursued her quite brutally; when she escaped from him he beat her with heavy blows of his tail. He disapproved when she tried to take food and drove her away from it; it was clear he wanted to have her just for himself and simply terrorised her. Once he had discharged his milt he threw himself on another female and tried to eat her, so that he had to be taken from the tank and placed somewhere else. This second female nonetheless produced fertile eggs,

numbering sixty-three in total. Miss Kistemaeckers noticed that the cloaca of all three animals was very sore, and she writes that fertilisation of the ova of *Andrias Scheuchzeri* seems to take place not by copulation, nor even spawning, but by what she called the sexual milieu. It is already evident that the two sexes need not come together at an appropriate time for fertilisation of the eggs to take place. This led the young researcher to carry out further experiments. She separated the two sexes; at the appropriate time she extracted the sperm from the male and put it into the water where the females were, at which the females began to discharge fertilised eggs. In another experiment Miss Kistemaeckers filtered the semen to remove the sperm; this gave a clear, slightly acidic liquid which she put into the females water; the females then began to discharge eggs, about fifty at a time, of which most were fertile and produced normal tadpoles. This is what led Miss Kistemaeckers to the important notion of the sexual milieu, which can be seen as a process in its own right, existing between parthenogenesis and sexual reproduction. The eggs are fertilised simply by a change in the chemical environment (a certain level of acidity, which has not so far been successfully created artificially), which is somehow connected with the sexual functions of the male although these functions themselves are not essential; the fact that the male does conjoin with the female is clearly no more than a vestige of an earlier stage of evolution when *Andrias* reproduced in the same way as other newts. Miss Kistemaeckers rightly observes that this form of mating is peculiar, some kind of inherited illusion of paternity; the male is not the real father of the tadpoles but only an impersonal provider of the chemical environment which is what really fertilises the ova. If we had a hundred newt couples together in a tank it would be tempting to think that a hundred individual acts of mating would take place; but in fact there will be just the one, a collective a sexualisation of the given environment or, to put it more precisely, the acidification of the water to which the mature eggs of the species will respond by developing into tadpoles. If this unknown acidification agent can be created artificially there will be no more need of males. So the sex life of this remarkable species is actually no more than an illusion; the erotic passion, the pair-bonding and sexual tyranny, fidelity for the time needed, the slow and cumbersome act of intercourse, all these things are actually unnecessary and no more than an outdated and almost symbolic act which, so to speak, decorates the impersonal creation by the male of the procreative environment. The strange indifference shown by the female to the frantic and pointless activity of the male is clear evidence that she instinctively feels that it is nothing more than a formal

ceremony or a prelude to the real love-making when they conjoin with the fertilising medium; it could almost be said that the female of *Andrias Scheuchzeri* understands this state of affairs clearly and goes through it objectively without any erotic illusions.

(The experiments performed by Miss Kistemaekers was followed up with some interesting research by the learned Abb^e Bontempelli. Having prepared some dried and powdered milt from *Andrias* he put it in the female's water, who then began to discharge fertile eggs. He obtained the same result if he dried and powdered *Andrias*'s male organ or if he took an extract in alcohol or by infusion and poured it into the female's water. He tried the same experiment, with the same result, when he took an extract of the male's pituitary gland and even when he took a scraping from the males skin, if taken in the rutting season. In all these cases, the females did not respond at first, but after a while they stopped seeking food and became stiff and motionless in the water, then after some hours they began to discharge eggs in a gelatinous coating, each about the size of pig's droppings.)

While discussing this matter, it will be necessary to describe the strange ceremony which became known as the dance of the salamanders. (This does not refer to the Salamander Dance which came into fashion around this time, especially in high society, and which Bishop Hiram declared to be the most depraved dance he had ever heard described.) The dance took place on evenings when there was a full moon (apart from in the breeding season). The males, and only the males, of *Andrias* would appear on the beach, form themselves into a circle and begin a strange, wave-like twisting and bending of the upper half of the body. This movement was typical of these giant newts at all times, but during these dances it develops into a wild passion, something like the dances of dervishes. Some researchers regard this frenzied twisting and stamping as a kind of cult of the moon, which would mean it is a kind of religious ceremony; on the other hand some researchers see the dance as essentially erotic in character and seek to explain it primarily in terms of the peculiar sexual procedures described above. We have already said that the female of *Andrias Scheuchzeri* is fertilised by the so-called sexual milieu surrounding males and females rather than by the personal conjoining of individual males and females. It was also said that the females accept this impersonal sexual relationship far more realistically and routinely than the males who, clearly for reasons of instinctive vanity and greed,

try to maintain at least the illusion of sexual triumph, leading them to play a role that involves betrothal and a husband's authority. This is one of the greatest erotic illusions to be found, and it is interesting that the illusion is corrected by these grand male ceremonies which seem to be nothing less than an instinctive attempt to reinforce their sense of belonging to a Male Collective. It is thought that this collective dance has the function of overcoming that atavistic and nonsensical illusion of the males sexual individuality; this whirling, inebriating, frenetic gang is nothing other than the Collective Male, the Collective Bridegroom and the Great Copulator that carries out its celebratory wedding dance and abandons itself to the great nuptial rite--and all the time the females are strangely excluded and left to squelch lethargically over the fish or mollusc they have eaten. The famous Charles J. Powell, who gave this newt ritual the name, Dance of the Male Principle, writes: "And in this ritual of male togetherness, do we not see the root and origin of the remarkable collectivism shown by the newts? Let us be aware that true animal society is only to be found where life and development of the species are not built on sexual pair-bonding, such as we see among bees and ants and termites. The society of the bee-hive can be described thus: I, the Mother Hive. In the case of the newts, their society must be described quite differently: We, the Male Principle. It is only when the males mass together at the right time and virtually perspire the fertilising sexual milieu that they become the Great Male which enters the womb of the female and generously multiplies life. Their paternity is collective; and for this reason their entire nature is collective and expresses itself in collective activity, whereas the females, once they have laid their eggs, lead a life that remains dispersed and solitary until the following spring. It is the males alone that create the community, the males alone that carry out collective tasks. There is no other species of animal wherein the female plays such a subordinate role as Andrias; they are excluded from communal activities and show not the slightest interest in them. Their moment comes only when the Male Principle imbues their environment with a chemical acidity that is barely perceptible, but which has such power of penetration, such an Alan vital, that it is effective even when the currents and tides of the oceans have diluted it to almost nothing. It is as if the Ocean itself were the male, fertilising millions of embryos on its shores.

"However vainly the cock might crow," Charles J. Powell continued, "it is to the female that in, most species, nature has given the dominant role in life. The male is there for his own passion and to kill; he is pompous and arrogant, while the

female represents the species in all its strength and lasting nobility. In the case of Andrias (and often in the case of man) the relationship is fundamentally different; by the creation of a masculine society and solidarity the male acquires clear biological dominance and determines how the species will develop to a far greater extent than the female. It may well be because of this marked male input to the direction of development that Andrias has so excelled in technical matters, which are talents typical of the male. Andrias is by nature a technologist and tends towards group activities; these secondary features of the male, by which I mean a talent for technology and a flair for organisation, has, before our very eyes, developed with such speed and such success that we would be compelled to speak of a miracle were we not aware of what a powerful force in life sexual determination is. Andrias Scheuchzeri is animal faber, and it is even possible that he will one day surpass man himself given enough time. All this is the result of one fact of nature; that they have created a society that is purely male."

Book Two

The Rise Of Civilisation

Chapter 1

Mister Povondra Reads the Paper

There are people who collect stamps, and others who collect first editions. Mr. Povondra, the doorman at the house of G.H. Bondy, had long been unable to find any meaning in his life; he had been wondering for years whether to become interested in prehistoric graves or develop a passion for international politics; but one evening, without any sort of warning, he suddenly knew what he had so far been lacking, what would make his life worthwhile. Great events usually come without any sort of warning.

That evening Mister Povondra was reading the paper, Mrs. Povondra was darning Frank's socks and Frank was pretending to study the tributaries on the left bank of the Danube. It was pleasantly quiet.

"I should have known," muttered Mister Povondra.

"What should you have known?" asked Mrs. Povondra as she lifted a thread.

"About these newts," said Father Povondra. "It says here that they've sold seventy million of them over the last three months."

"That's a lot, isn't it!" said Mrs. Povondra.

"I should think so. In fact that's an astonishing number, Mother. Just think, seventy million!" Mister Povondra turned to look at her. "They must have made a fortune selling all of them! And there's all the work they're doing now," he added after thinking for a moment. "It says here that they're claiming new land and building new islands everywhere at an amazing rate.--People can create as much new land as they want now, I should think. This is wonderful, Mother. I'm telling you, this is a bigger step forward than the discovery of America." Mister Povondra thought about this for a while. "A new period of history, don't you think? What shall we do, Mother, we're living in great times."

There was once more a long period of homely silence. Father Povondra suddenly started drawing harder on his pipe. "And just think, if it wasn't for me it would

never have happened!"

"What would never have happened?"

"All this business with the newts. This new period of history. If you look at it properly, it was actually me who put it all together."

Mrs. Povondra looked up from the holes in the socks. "How's that, then?"

"That it was me who let that captain in to see Mister Bondy on that day. If I hadn't announced him there was no way the captain could ever have met Mister Bondy. If it hadn't been for me, Mother, nothing could ever have come of it. Nothing at all."

"Maybe this captain could have found someone else," Mrs. Povondra objected.

Mister Povondra rattled indignantly on his pipe. "Now what do you know about that sort of thing? It's only Mister G.H. Bondy who could do a thing like that. He has more foresight than I don't know who. Anyone else would just have thought it was all madness or a confidence trick; but not Mister Bondy! He's got a nose for these things, girl!" Mister Povondra considered this for a while. "That captain, what was his name again, Vantoch, he didn't look much. Sort of fat old man, he was. Any other doorman would have told him he had no business knocking at the door, the master isn't home, and that sort of thing; but, you listen, I had some sort of intuition or something. I announced him to Mister Bondy; I said to myself, Mister Bondy might be cross with me but I'll take the responsibility on myself and I'll announce him. I've always said a doorman has to be a good judge of character. There are times when someone rings at the door, and he looks just like a lord, and he turns out to be a refrigerator salesman. And there are other times when some fat old man turns up at the door, and look what can come of that. You need to be a good judge of character," Father Povondra mused. "There you see, Frank, that's the difference a man in a humble position can make. You take my example, always try your best to do your duty just like I've always done." Mister Povondra nodded his head in pride and self congratulation. "I could have turned that captain away at the gate and saved myself the bother of going down the steps. Any other doorman wouldn't have cared and shut the gate in his face, he would. And if he did he'd have ruined this fantastic step forward for mankind. Always bear in mind, Frank, if everyone in

the world did his duty everything would be alright. And pay attention when I'm talking to you."

"Yes, Dad," muttered Frank discontentedly.

Father Povondra cleared his throat. "Pass me the scissors, Mother. I think I'd better cut this article out so that I've always got something to remind me."

So it was that Mister Povondra started his collection of newspaper cuttings about the newts. Without his passion as a collector much of the material we now have would otherwise have been lost. He cut out and saved everything written about the newts that he could find; it should even be said that after some initial fumbblings he learned to plunder the newspapers in his favourite café wherever there was mention of the newts and even developed an unusual, almost magical, virtuosity in tearing the appropriate article out of the paper and putting it in his pocket right under the nose of the head waiter. It is well known that all collectors are willing to steal and murder if that is what's needed to add a certain item to their collection, but that is not in any way a stain on their moral character.

His life was now the life of a collector, and that gave it meaning. Evening after evening he would count and arrange his cuttings under the indulgent eyes of Mrs. Povondra who knew that every man is partly mad and partly a little child; it was better for him to play with his cuttings than to go out drinking and playing cards. She even made some space in the scullery for all the boxes he had made himself for his collection; could anything more be asked of a wife?

Even Mister Bondy was surprised at Mister Povondra's encyclopaedic knowledge of everything concerning the newts which he showed at every opportunity. With some embarrassment, Mister Povondra admitted that he collected everything printed about the salamanders and let Mister Bondy see his boxes. G.H. Bondy kindly praised him for his collection; what does it matter that only great men can be so generous and only powerful people can give pleasure without it costing them a penny? It's alright for those who are great. Mister Bondy, for instance, told the office of the Salamander Syndicate to send Mister Povondra all the cuttings to do with the newts that they did not need to keep in their archives, and lucky Mister Povondra, somewhat dismayed, received whole parcels of documents in all the languages of the world every day. And for documents in the Cyrillic alphabet, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, Chinese script,

Bengali, Tamil, Javanese, Burmese or Taalik he was especially grateful. "When I think;" he said about it all, "without me it would never have happened!"

As we have already said, Mister Povondra's collection saved much historic material concerning the whole story of the newts; but that, of course, does not mean to say it was enough to satisfy a scientific historian. Firstly, Mister Povondra had never received a specialist education as assistant in historic or archival methods, and he made no indication on his cuttings of the source, or the date, so that we do not know when or where each document was published. And secondly, faced with so much material piling up around him, Mister Povondra kept mainly the longest articles which he considered must be the most important, while the shorter reports were simply thrown into the coal scuttle; as a result, through all this period, remarkable few facts and reports were conserved by him. Thirdly, the hand of Mrs. Povondra played a considerable part in the matter; when she carefully filled up one of Mister Povondra's boxes she would quietly and secretly pull out some of the cuttings and burn them, which took place several times a year. The only ones she spared were the ones that did not grow in number very fast, such as the cuttings printed in the Malabar, Tibetan or Coptic scripts; these remained more or less complete, although for certain gaps in our body of knowledge they are not of great value. This means that the material we have available concerning the history of the newts is very fragmented, like the land records of the eighth century A.D., or the selected writings of the poetess, Sappho; but some documents, here and there, did happen to survive about this phase of the great history of the world, and despite all the gaps we will do our best to summarise them under the title *The Rise of Civilisation*.

Chapter 2

The Rise of Civilisation (History of the Newts)

1

In the history of the epoch announced by G.H. Bondy at the memorable general meeting of the Pacific Export Company with his prophetic words about the coming utopia, ² it is not possible to measure events in centuries or even decades, as has been possible in previous ages of world history. Instead we must measure history in units of three months, which is how often the quarterly economic statistics appear. ³ In this present period, history, so to speak, is manufactured by mass production; this is why the speed of history is so much greater (estimated to be approximately five-fold). It is simply not possible nowadays to wait centuries for the world to turn into something good or bad. The migrations of nations, for instance, which at one time was drawn out over several generations, could be completed within three years using modern transport methods; otherwise there would be no way of making a profit from it. The same applies to the decline of the Roman Empire, the colonisation of continents, the massacre of the Indians and so on. All this could be completed incomparably faster if put into the hands of well funded business. In this way, the enormous success of the Newt Syndicate and its powerful influence on the history of the world is certainly a sign of things to come.

The history of the newts was characterised from the first by good and rational organisation and that is primarily, although not solely, thanks to the Newt Syndicate; it should be acknowledged that science, philanthropy, education, the press and other factors played a substantial part in the astonishing expansion and progress of the newts, but it's still true to say that it was the Newt Syndicate that conquered new continents and coastlines for them, virtually day by day, even when they had to overcome many obstacles to their expansion. ⁴ The syndicate's quarterly statements show that the newts were gradually settled in the ports of India and China; how colonies of newts overwhelmed the coasts of Africa and jumped over to America where a new and modern hatchery soon appeared on the Gulf of Mexico; how, as well as the broad waves of colonisations, smaller, pioneering groups of newts were sent out to establish new places for migration. The Newt Syndicate sent, for instance, a thousand top quality newts as a present

to Waterstaat in Holland, six hundred were given to the city of Marseilles to clean out the old harbour, and similar presents were made elsewhere. The dispersion and settlement of the newts around the world was, unlike the expansion of mankind, simply well planned and enormous; left to Nature it would certainly have taken thousands of years; but that is merely hypothetical. Nature has never been so enterprising and targeted as man's industry and commerce. It seemed that the lively demand for them had its influence on the newts' own reproductive abilities; the number of tadpoles produced by any one female rose to as much as a hundred and fifty per year. Loses to sharks and other predatory fish were reduced almost to zero after the newts had been equipped with underwater pistols and dumdum bullets to protect themselves. ⁵

ENGLAND CLOSED OFF TO NEWTS?

(Reuter) In reply to a question in the House of Commons from Mr. J. Leeds, Sir Samuel Mandeville stated today that His Majesty's Government had closed the Suez Canal to newt transports of any kind; he added that no newt would be permitted to be employed on any shoreline or any sovereign waters of the British Isles. The reason for this measure, Sir Samuel declared, was partly to do with the security of the British Isles and partly to do with old statutes still in force concerning the elimination of slave trading.

In reply to a question from Mr. B. Russel, M.P., Sir Samuel stated that this position would, of course, not apply to British colonies and dominions.

The expansion of the newt population did not run smoothly everywhere, of course; in some places conservative groups took severe protective measures against the introduction of new workforces, seeing the newts as competition with human workers; ⁶ Others expressed the fear that the newts, living on small marine animals, posed a threat to fishing, there were those who argued that the newts would undermine coastlines and islands with their underwater tunnels and passageways. There were certainly many people who warned against the introduction of the newts; but whenever any innovation or any progress has been made it has always met with resistance and mistrust; that was the case with industrial machinery and it was the case with the newts. In other places misunderstandings of other sorts appeared, ⁷ but the news media all round the world, who understood the enormous commercial possibilities offered by the

newts, provided a great deal of help in these matters and with the help of effective and large scale advertising campaigns the salamanders became established all around the globe and were welcomed with lively interest and even enthusiasm. ⁸ Trading in newts was mostly in the hands of the Newt Syndicate, which carried it out with its own specially made tanker ships; the centre of trading was the Salamander Building in Singapore which functioned as a kind of newt stock exchange. ⁹ As the turnover in newts rose, trading, of course, became very wild; the Newt Syndicate was no longer able to observe and control all the hatcheries established by the late Captain van Toch in many places and especially around the small and remote islands of Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia; many of the bays inhabited by newts were left to their own devices. As a result, while the cultivation of salamanders was well organised and controlled in some areas, in others there was extensive hunting of wild newts, similar in many ways to the seal hunting expeditions that used to take place; the hunting expeditions were to some extent illegal, but as there were no laws protecting the newts no-one was ever brought to account for anything more serious than setting foot on the territory of a sovereign state without permission; as the newts on these islands multiplied at an astonishing rate and now and then caused damage to the local people's fields and orchards, these uncontrolled newt hunts were tacitly regarded as a natural way of regulating the newt population. ¹⁰

Trading in newts was well organised, and there was an extensive advertising campaign in the press, but the biggest influence in the expansion of the newt population was the enormous wave of technological idealism which inundated the entire world at that time. G.H. Bondy rightly foresaw that from then on the human spirit would be working with whole new continents and new Atlantisses. The whole of the Newt Age was dominated by a lively and fertile dispute among the technically minded as to whether firm land should be constructed with shores of reinforced concrete or merely light land laid down as deposits of marine sand. New and gigantic projects appeared almost every day: there were some Italian engineers who suggested the construction of a Great Italy taking in most of the Mediterranean Sea as far as Tripoli, the Balearic Islands and the Dodecanese, and others who wanted to establish a new continent to be called 'Lemuria' to the east of Italian Somalia which would take in the entire Indian Ocean in one move. With the help of armies of newts, new islands covering thirteen and a half acres were indeed laid down near the Somalian port of Mogadishu. Japan planned and partly realised a new great island to cover the former Marian Archipelago and

made preparations to combine the Caroline and Marshall Islands into two big islands, provisionally named 'New Nippon'; each of the two islands was to be created by means of an artificial volcano which would remind their prospective inhabitants of the famous Mount Fuji. It was also rumoured that German engineers were secretly building a durable, concrete landmass in the Sargasso Sea which was to be the new Atlantis and, it was said, would be a threat to French East Africa; but it seems that this went no further than laying the foundations. In Holland, Zeeland was reclaimed; France combined Guadeloupe, Grande Terre, Basse Terre and La D'Alphonse into one big island; the United States began to build the first airfield-island on the 37th. meridian (two storeys high with an enormous hotel, sport stadium, funfair and a cinema for five thousand people). It simply seemed that the last limits imposed on human expansion imposed by the sea had now fallen; a new and radiant age of amazing technical plans began; man realised that now, at last, he was becoming the Lord of the World, and that was thanks to the newts who had stepped onto the world stage at the right moment and, as it were, with the force of history. There is no doubt that the newts would never have burgeoned the way they did if our own technical age had not prepared so many jobs for them and so many places of long-term employment. The future of the Workers of the Sea now seemed to be guaranteed for centuries to come.

Science, too, played an important part in the development of newt commerce, and quickly turned its attention to investigating both the newts' physiology and their psychology. ¹¹ Because of this scientific research people stopped regarding the newts as some kind of miracle; in the cold light of science the salamanders lost much of their aura of primordial strangeness and uniqueness; once they had become the subject of psychological tests they began to seem very average and uninteresting; their enormous talents were dismissed by the scientists to the realm of myth. The common or garden salamander was identified, and it turned out to be something entirely dull and quite limited in its abilities; only the newspapers would now and then display a Miracle Newt that could multiply five figure numbers in its head, but people soon got tired of that, especially when it had been shown that even a mere human could perform the same trick given the right training. People simply began to consider the newts as much a matter of course as an adding machine or other device; they now no longer saw anything mysterious about them, the newts no longer seemed to have emerged from the unknown depths of the sea with who knows what purpose. And people never do

regard something as mysterious if it serves and benefits them, only if it's something harmful or threatening; and as the newts, as has been shown, were highly versatile and useful, ¹² they were simply accepted as a basic part of a rational and ordinary life.

In short, it was entirely natural that the newts stopped being a sensation, even though there were now as many as a hundred million of them; the public interest they had excited had been the interest of a novelty. They still appeared now and then in films (Sally and Andy, the Two Good Salamanders) and on the cabaret stage where singers endowed with an especially bad voice came on in the role of newts with rasping voices and atrocious grammar, but as soon as the newts had become a familiar and large-scale phenomenon the problems they presented, so to speak, were of a different character. ¹³ Although the great newt sensation quickly evaporated it was replaced with something that was somewhat more solid--the Newt Question. Not for the first time in the history of mankind, the most vigorous activist in the Newt Question was of course a woman. This was *Mme.* Louise Zimmermann, the manager of a guest house for girls in Lausanne, who, with exceptional and boundless energy, propagated this noble maxim around the world: Give the newts a proper education! She would tirelessly draw attention both to the newts' natural abilities and to the danger that might arise for human civilisation if the salamanders weren't carefully taught to reason and to understand morals, but it was long before she met with anything but incomprehension from the public. ¹⁴ "Just as the Roman culture disappeared under the onslaught of the barbarians our own educated civilisation will disappear if it is allowed to become no more than an island in a sea of beings that are spiritually enslaved, our noble ideals cannot be allowed to become dependent on them," she prophesied at six thousand three hundred and fifty seven lectures that she delivered at women's institutes all over Europe, America, Japan, China, Turkey and elsewhere. "If our culture is to survive there must be education for all. We cannot have any peace to enjoy the gifts of our civilisation nor the fruits of our culture while all around us there are millions and millions of wretched and inferior beings artificially held down in the state of animals. Just as the slogan of the nineteenth century was 'Freedom for Women', so the slogan of our own age must be 'GIVE THE NEWTS A PROPER EDUCATION!'" And on she went. Thanks to her eloquence and her incredible persistence, *Mme.* Louise Zimmermann mobilised women all round the world and gathered sufficient funds to enable her to found the First Newt Lyceum at Beaulieu (near Nice),

where the tadpoles of salamanders working in Marseilles and Toulon were instructed in French language and literature, rhetoric, public behaviour, mathematics and cultural history. ¹⁵ The Girls' School for Newts in Menton was slightly less successful, as the staple courses in music, diet and cookery and fine handwork (which *Mme.* Zimmermann insisted on for primarily pedagogical reasons) met with a remarkable lack of enthusiasm, if not with a stubborn hostility among its young students. In contrast with this, though, the first public examinations for young newts was such an instant and startling success that they were quickly followed by the establishment of the Marine Polytechnic for Newts at Cannes and the Newts' University at Marseilles with the support of the society for the care and protection of animals; it was at this university that the first newt was awarded a doctorate of law.

The matter of newt education now began to develop quickly and along its normal path. Exemplary though the *Ã‰coles* Zimmermann were, the most progressive teachers raised a number of serious objections to them; in particular they insisted that the established humanistic schooling for young humans was not suitable for young newts; they certainly recommended the teaching of literature and history but they also recommended that as much time and facilities as possible should be devoted to modern practical subjects such as the natural sciences, craftwork, technical understanding, physical education and so on. These Reform Schools, or Schools for Practical Life, as they were known were, in their turn, passionately opposed by those who supported a classical education and declared that newts could only come to approach the lofty cultural level of human beings on the basis of Latin, and that there was no point in teaching them to speak if they weren't also taught to recite poetry and perform oratory with the eloquence of Cicero. There was a long and rather heated debate which was finally settled when the schools for salamanders were taken over by the state and schools for human children were reformed so that they came as close as possible to the ideals of the Reform Schools for newts.

It was now a matter of course that other countries would also declare their belief in making the newts have a proper, state supervised education. One by one, all the seafaring nations declared themselves for it (with the exception of Great Britain, of course); and because these schools for newts were not burdened with the classical traditions of schools for human children, and were able to make use of all the latest methods in psychotechnology, technical education, pre-military

exercises and other educational innovations, these schools quickly evolved into the most modern and scientifically advanced educational system in the world, envied by teachers and students everywhere.

As soon as there are schools there needs to be a language, and that raised the question of which of the world's languages would be the best for the salamanders to learn. The first newts in the Pacific islands spoke, of course, in the Pidgin English they had picked up from natives and sailors; many of them spoke Malay or other local dialects. Newts bred for the market in Singapore were taught to speak Basic English, the scientifically simplified English that gets by with a few hundred expressions without the encumbrance of outdated grammar; and as a result this modified version of standard English began to be called Salamander English. In the exemplary *Ä%coles Zimmermann* the newts expressed themselves in the language of Corneille; not, of course, for any chauvinistic reason but because that is simply part of any good education; at the reform schools, on the other hand, Esperanto was learned so that it would serve as a lingua franca. There were five or six other new Universal Languages which emerged around this time with the intention of replacing the Babylonian confusion of human languages with a single, common mother-tongue for the whole world of newts and men; needless to say that there were countless disputes about which of these international languages is the most useful, most euphonious and the most universal. The final result, of course, was that there was a different universal language propagated in every nation. [16](#)

All this became simpler when the education of newts was nationalised: the newts in every state were to be brought up in the appropriate local language. Although the salamanders found it relatively easy to learn foreign languages and were keen to do so there were found to be some peculiar difficulties, partly to do with adapting their speech organs to human language and partly to do with mainly psychological reasons; they had difficulty, for instance, in pronouncing long words with many syllables and would try to reduce them to a single syllable which they would bark out in a rather nasal voice; they would say L instead of R and lisp on their sibilants; they would leave off grammatical endings, they never did learn to distinguish between 'I' and 'we' and the question of whether a noun was masculine or feminine was matter of complete indifference for them (this may have been manifestation of their indifference to sex outside the breeding season). In short, every language they learned took on new and characteristic

forms in their mouths, reorganising it into something simpler and more rudimentary. It is worth nothing that their neologisms, pronounciations and simplified grammar was quickly adopted by both the simplest people in the ports and by the so-called best people; and from the ports this way of speaking spread out into the newspapers and was soon in general use. Even many humans stopped attending to grammatical gender, word endings were dropped, declinations disappeared; our golden youth neglected to say r properly and learned to lisp; few educated people were any longer certain what was meant by 'indeterminism' or 'transcendent', simply because these words, even for human beings, were too long and too hard to pronounce.

In short, for good or for ill, the newts became able to speak almost every language of the world according to what coast they lived on. About this time, some of the Czech national newspapers began to complain bitterly, no doubt with good reason, that none of the newts could speak their language. If there were salamanders who could speak Portuguese, Dutch and the languages of other small nations why were there none that could speak Czech? It was true, they conceded in regretful and learned terms, that Czechoslovakia had no sea coasts, and that means there will be no marine newts here, but that does not mean that Czechs should not play the same part in the culture of the world as many of the other nations whose language was being taught to thousands of newts, or perhaps even a greater part. It was only right and proper that the newts should also have some knowledge of Czech culture; but how were they to be informed about it if none of them knew the Czech language? It was not likely that someone somewhere in the world would acknowledge this cultural debt and found a chair in Czech and Czechoslovak literature at one of the newt universities. As the poet puts it, 'Trust no-one in the whole wide world, we have no friends out there'. And so one of the newspaper articles declared that Czechs themselves would have to do something to rectify the matter. Whatever we've done in the world, it asserted, we've done by our own efforts! We have a duty and the right to try to recruit friends even among newts; but it seems that the foreign ministry does not have much interest in spreading the good name of our country and our products among newts, even though other, smaller nations devote millions to opening their cultural treasures to them as well as generating interest in their industrial products.--This article attracted a great deal of interest from the confederation of industry, and one result was that a brief handbook of Czech for newts was published, complete with illustrations of Czechoslovak

handwriting styles. It may seem hard to believe, but this little book was remarkably successful and sold more than seven hundred copies. [17](#)

Matters of education and language were, of course, only one aspect of the great newt problem which grew up, as it were, under people's feet. The question quickly arose, for instance, of how people were to behave towards the newts in, so to speak, the social sphere. At first, in the almost prehistoric period of the Newt Age, there were, of course, societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals which passionately ensured that the newts were not treated in ways that were cruel or inhumane; and it was thanks to their continuous efforts that government offices almost everywhere saw to it that the regulations set out by police and veterinary inspectors for the conditions of other livestock applied also to newts. Opponents of vivisection signed many protests and petitions calling for a ban on scientific experiments on live newts; and many countries did indeed pass laws to that effect. [18](#) But as the newts became more educated it became less clear whether newts should simply be included under animal protection legislation; for some reason, not entirely clear, it seemed rather inappropriate. And so the Salamander Protection League was founded under the patronage of the Duchess of Huddersfield. This league, numbering more than two hundred members, mostly in England, achieved many effective and praiseworthy improvements for the newts; in particular, they succeeded in establishing special newt playgrounds on the coast where, undisturbed by inquisitive human eyes, their meetings and sporting celebrations took place (by which they probably meant their secret dances once a month); they ensured that all places of education (even including the University of Oxford) persuaded their students not to throw stones at newts; to some extent they ensured that young tadpoles at school weren't over-burdened with work; and they even saw to it that places where newts lived or worked were surrounded by a high wooden fence that would protect them from various intrusions and, most importantly, would form an adequate barrier between the world of men and the world of newts. [19](#)

However it was not long before these commendable private initiatives, intended to establish a fair and humane relationship between human society and that of newts, were found not to be enough. It was relatively easy to include salamanders into industrial processes, but it was much harder and more complicated to include them in any way into the existing precepts of society. People who were more conservative asserted that there was no question to be

solved, there were no legal or social problems; the newts, they said, were simply the property of their employers and the employers were responsible for them and any damage they might cause; despite their undoubted intelligence the salamanders were legally no more than property, an object or an estate, and any legal measure concerning the newts would, they said, be a violation of the holy rights of private property. In response, others objected that as the newts were a kind of intelligent being and to a large extent responsible for their actions they might freely find various ways of violating existing laws. How could a newt owner be expected to bear the responsibility for any offences committed by his salamanders? A risk of that sort would certainly destroy any private initiative where the employment of newts was concerned. There are no fences in the sea, they said, newts cannot be closed in and kept under supervision. For this reason, it would be necessary to pass laws directed at the newts themselves; in this way they would respect the human legal order and conduct themselves in accordance with the regulations laid down for them. [20](#)

As far as is known, the first laws governing salamanders were passed in France. The first paragraph set out the newts' obligations in the event of mobilisation for war; the second (known as the Lex Deval) instructed the newts that they were allowed to settle only on those parts of the coast indicated by their owners or an appropriate office of local government; the third stipulated that newts were required, under any circumstances, to obey any order given them by a member of the police; any failure to obey a police order would entitle police authorities to punish them by means of incarceration in a place that was dry and brightly lit, or even to deny them the right to work for long periods of time. The left-wing parties responded by putting a motion to parliament that a legal social system for newts should be worked out. These social measures would limit the amount of work required from them and place certain obligations on anyone employing newts (eg. fourteen days leave at mating time in the spring); the extreme left objected that the newts should be designated as enemies of the working class because they work too hard in the service of capitalism, work for almost nothing, and thus they endanger the working man's standard of living; this demand was followed up with a strike by harbour workers in Brest and large demonstrations in Paris; many people were injured and Deval was forced to resign his job as minister. In Italy the salamanders were placed under the authority of a special Newt Corporation made up of employers and public officials, in Holland they were governed by the ministry supervising coastal constructions, in short every

state solved the newt problem in its own different way; but most of the public decisions governing public responsibility, and largely limiting the animal freedom enjoyed by the newts, were roughly the same anywhere you looked.

It should be understood that as soon as the first laws for newts were passed there were people who, in the name of juridical logic, reasoned that if human society places certain obligations on the salamanders it would have to grant them certain rights. Any state that lays down laws for newts acknowledges, ipso facto, that they are beings capable of acting freely and responsibly, as legal subjects, or even as members of the state in which case their status as citizens would need to be adjusted in whatever legislation they lived under. It would, of course, have been possible to designate the newts as foreign immigrants; but in that case the state would be unable to exact certain services and duties from them in the event of mobilisation for war, which every country in the civilised world did do (with the exception of England). In the event of armed conflict we would certainly want the newts to protect our shorelines; but in that case we could not deny them certain civil rights such as the right to vote, the right of assembly, the right to participate in various public offices and so on. ²¹ It was even suggested that the newts had a kind of independent state of their own under the water; but these considerations and others like them remained purely academic; they never resulted in any practical solution, mainly because the newts themselves never asked for any civil rights from anyone.

There was another lively debate about the newts which took place without their direct interest or participation, and that was around the question of whether they could be baptised. The Catholic church took a firm stand from the start and said they certainly could not; as the newts were not the descendants of Adam they were not affected by Original Sin, the sacrament of baptism could not be used to cleanse them of it. The Holy Church had no wish to decide the question as to whether the newts had an immortal soul or any other share of God's love and salvation; their good wishes towards the newts could only be shown by a special prayer for them, to be read on certain days at the same time as prayers for souls in Purgatory and intercessions for unbelievers. ²² For the Protestant church it was not so simple; they acknowledged that the newts had reason and could therefore understand Christian teaching, but they hesitated to make them members of the church and therefore brothers in Christ. So they restricted themselves to issuing an abridged form of the Holy Gospel for Newts on

waterproof paper and distributed many million copies of it; they also considered whether they should work out some kind of Basic Christian for them, a rudimentary and simplified version of Christianity analogous to Basic English; but all attempts in this direction created so many theological disputes that in the end they had to give up on the idea. ²³ Some of the religious sects, especially those from America, had fewer scruples in the matter; they sent their missionaries out to the newts to teach them the True Faith and baptised them according to the words of Scripture: Go out into the world and teach all nations. But very few missionaries succeeded in getting past the wooden fences that divided the newts from people; employers would not let them have access to the newts because their preaching might keep them away from work. So every so often you would see a preacher standing beside a tarred fence, zealously propounding the word of God, while the dogs fiercely barked at their enemy from the other side.

As far as is known, monism was spread quite widely among the newts, with some of the newts believing in materialism and some of them in the gold standard or some other scientific doctrine. One popular philosopher called Georg Sequenz even compiled a special set of religious teachings for the newts centred around a belief in something called the Great Salamander. This system of faith met with no success whatsoever among the newts but found many converts among human beings, especially in the major cities where almost overnight a large number of secret temples for the salamander cult appeared. ²⁴ Most of the newts themselves, somewhat later on, adopted a different faith, although it is not known how they came to it; this was the worship of Moloch, whom they imagined as an enormous newt with a human head; it was said they had gigantic metal idols of this god under the water which they had had made by Armstrong or Krupp. However, no more details about this cult or its rituals were ever learned--despite their reputation for exceptional cruelty and secrecy--because they took place under water. It seems that this faith spread among them because the name 'Moloch' reminded them of the Latin and German words for newts ('Molche').

It is clear from the preceding paragraphs that the Newt Question started out, and for a long time remained, centred around whether and to what extent the newts had reason and whether, as clearly civilised beings, they would be capable of making use of certain human rights, even though only on the edge of the ordered

society in which human beings lived; in other words it was an internal question for individual states and it was settled in the context of citizen's rights. It was many years before it occurred to anyone that the Newt Question could have wide ranging international importance, or that it might become necessary to deal with the salamanders not only as intelligent beings but also as a newt collective or nation of newts. In truth, it should be said that the first step towards this conception of the Newt Problem was taken by some of the more eccentric Christian sects who tried to baptise the newts as instructed by Holy Scripture: Go out into the entire world and teach every nation. In this way it was made explicit that the newts were a sort of nation. ²⁵ But the first international and significant acknowledgement of the newts as a nation was in the famous speech given at the Communist Internationals, signed by Comrade Molokov and addressed to "all the repressed and revolutionary newts throughout the world". ²⁶ This call seems to have had no direct effect on the newts themselves, but it was widely discussed in the press around the world and had great influence, at least, in that a rain of fervent invitations from every side began to fall on the newts, exhorting them, as the nation of greater newtdom, they should align themselves with this or that idealist, political or social program of human society. ²⁷

Now the International Bureau of Employment in Geneva began to concern itself with the Newt Problem. Here there were two views in opposition to each other; one side acknowledged the newts as a new working class and strove to have all social legislation extended to them, regulating length of working day, paid holidays, insurance for invalidity and old age and so on; the other view, in contrast, declared that the newts were a growing danger as competition for human manpower and working newts were anti-social and should simply be banned. Not only employers' representatives objected to this idea but also delegates from the working people, pointing out that the newts were not just a new army of workers but also a major and growing market. As has been said, in recent times the numbers employed in metal working (working tools, equipment, metal idols for the newts), weapon manufacture, chemical industry (underwater explosives), paper industry (schoolbooks for the newts), cement manufacture, forestry, artificial foodstuffs (Salamander food) and many other areas had all risen at a rate unprecedented in peace time; there was a rise of 27% in shipping tonnage compared with the period before the newts, coal production increased by 18.6%. The rise in employment and prosperity for people indirectly caused a rise in turnover in other branches of industry too. Most recently, the newts had

been ordering more engineering parts according to their own designs, using them to assemble pneumatic drills, hammers, underwater motors, printing machinery, underwater radio equipment and other machinery, all to their own plans and all done underwater. These machine parts were paid for by higher productivity; by now a fifth of all world production in heavy industry and in fine mechanics were dependent on orders from the newts. If you put an end to the newts you can put an end to one factory in five; instead of modern prosperity there would be millions unemployed. The International Bureau of Employment could not, of course, simply ignore this objection, and in the end, and after long discussion, it arrived at this compromise solution, that "the above named group of employees, S (amphibians), may be employed only on water or underwater, and on the shore only as far as ten meters above the high water line; they may not extract coal or oil from beneath the seabed; they may not produce paper, textiles, or artificial leather made from seaweed to be marketed on land" and so on; these restrictions on newt manufacturing were set out in nineteen legal paragraphs which we will not cite in more detail, mainly because, needless to say, nobody paid them any attention; but as a magnanimous and truly international solution to the Newt Problem in the fields of commerce and society it was held up as a useful and imposing achievement.

In other respects, international recognition of the newts was somewhat slower, especially where cultural contact was concerned. When the much quoted article, "The Geological Structure of the Seabed around the Islands of the Bahamas", was published in the specialist press and the name 'John Seaman' given as the author, then of course nobody realised that this was the scientific work of an educated salamander; but when newt-researchers appeared at scientific congresses or addressed various academic or learned societies to report on their studies in oceanography, geography, hydrobiology, higher mathematics or other precise sciences in it caused much consternation and indignation, expressed by the great Dr. Martel in the following words: "Do these vermin think they've got something to teach us?" The learned Dr. Onoshita from Japan, who dared to quite from a report by a newt (something to do with the development of the yoke sac of the fry of the deep sea fish, *Argyrolepis Hemigymnus Cocco*), he was ostracised by the scientific community and committed harakiri; it was a matter of honour and professional pride among university scientists that they don't take into account any of the scientific work done by a newt. This increased the attention (if not outrage) given to the Centre Universitaire de Nice when it

invited Dr. Charles Mercier, a highly learned newt from the harbour at Toulon, to give a celebratory lecture on the theme of conic sections in non-Euclidean geometry which was met with remarkable success. ²⁸ Those attending the event included a delegate from Geneva, *Mme.* Maria Dimineanu; this outstanding and generous lady was so impressed by Dr. Mercier's modesty and erudition ("Pauvre petit," she is said to have sighed, "il est tellement laid!") that she made it a part of her tirelessly active life to have the newts accepted as a member of the United Nations. Politicians tried in vain to explain to this eloquent and energetic lady that the salamanders could not be a member of the United Nations because they were not a sovereign state and did not have any territory. *Mme.* Dimineanu began to propagate the idea that the newts should have their own free territory somewhere on the planet and their own underwater state. This idea was of course rather unwelcome if not directly dangerous; eventually a happy solution was found in that the United Nations would set up a special Commission for the Study of the Newt Question, which was to include two delegates from the newt world; the first to be called on, under pressure from *Mme.* Dimineanu, was Dr. Charles Mercier of Toulon, and the second was a certain Don Mario, a fat and learned newt from Cuba carrying out scientific work in the field of plankton and neritic pelagial. In this way the newts reached the highest ever international acknowledgement of their existence. ²⁹

So we see the salamanders achieving a steep and continuous rise. Their population is now estimated at seven thousand million, although with increasing civilisation their fertility shows a marked decline (to twenty or thirty tadpoles per female per year). They have occupied more than sixty percent of the world's coastlines; coasts around the polar regions are still not habitable, but newts from Canada have begun to colonise the coast of Greenland, even succeeding in pushing the Eskimos back inland and taking the fishing industry and the trade in fish oils into their own hands. The upsurge in their material well-being went hand in hand with their progress in civilisation; they join the ranks of educated nations with compulsory schooling and can boast of many hundred of their own underwater newspapers distributed in millions of copies, scientific institutions whose buildings were an example to all, and so on. It should be understood that this cultural ascent was not always smooth and without internal disagreements; we know remarkably little about the internal affairs of the newts, but there are some indications (such as newts found dead with cuts to their noses and heads) that, under the ocean, there was a long, protracted and passionate dispute under

the ocean between the young newts and the old. The young newts seem clearly to have been in favour of progress without exception or reserve, and declared that even under the water they should pursue all the educations known on the dry land with all their efforts, even including football, flirting, fascism and sexual perversions; whereas the old newts, it seemed, were more conservative to the nature of newt-dom, were unwilling to give up the good old animal habits and instincts; they left no doubt about their condemnation of the young newts' lust for novelty and saw therein a decline and a betrayal of traditional newt ideals; they were certainly also opposed to the foreign influences so blindly followed by the corrupted youth of today, and they asked whether it was worthy of the dignity of proud and self-conscious newts to ape everything done by humans. ³⁰ We can imagine that slogans such as 'Back to the Miocene!', 'Down with all Humanising Influences!', 'Fight for the Right for Newts to be Undisturbed!' and so on were coined. Without a doubt, there were all the preconditions for a lively generational conflict of views, and for a profound revolution in the newts' spiritual development; unfortunately, we are not able to give any more precise details, but we hope that the newts made what they could out of this conflict.

So now we see the newts on the way to their greatest flowering; but the world of human beings, too, was enjoying unprecedented prosperity. New continents were planned out with great enthusiasm, shallow waters were converted to dry land, and artificial islands for aeroplanes appeared in the middle of the oceans; but compared with the enormous technical projects which would entirely reconstruct the globe these were as nothing, and the projects awaited nothing but someone to finance them. The newts worked tirelessly in all the seas and on the edge of all the continents for as long as the night lasted; they seemed contented and asked for nothing for themselves but something to do and a piece of coastline where they could drill their holes and build the paths to their dark homes. They had their cities under the water and under the land, their subterranean metropolises, their Essens and their Birminghams twenty to fifty meters down at the bottom of the sea; they have their overcrowded industrial zones, ports, transport lines and cities of a million inhabitants; in short, they had their more or less ³¹ unknown but, it seems, highly technically developed world. Although they did not have their own kilns and foundries they were given metals by human beings in exchange for work. They did not have their own explosives but they bought them from human beings. Their fuel for transport was the sea with its tides and its currents, with its undertows and differences in temperature; they had to obtain

their turbines from human beings but they were well able to make use of them; and what is civilisation if not the ability to make use of things invented by others? Even if the newts, let us say, had no thoughts of their own they were well able to have their own science. They had no music or literature but got by perfectly well without them; and people began to see that thanks to the newts everything was fantastically modern. People could even learn something from the newts--and no wonder: were the newts not amazingly successful and what should people take their example from if not from success? Never in the history of mankind had so much been manufactured, constructed and earned as in this great age. With the newts came enormous progress and the ideal known as Quantity. The phrase, "We people of the Newt Age", became widely used, and used with justified pride; where could we have got in the old-fashioned Human Age with the slow, petty and useless fiddling known as culture, art, pure science or suchlike. The self aware people of the Newt Age declared that they would no longer waste their time delving into the Questions of the Universe; they would have enough to do just with the quantity of things being manufactured. the whole future of the world would consist in constantly raising production and consumption; and for that there would need to be still more newts so that they could produce even more and consume even more. The newts were a simply a matter of quantity; they had achieved their epoch-making changes because there were so many of them. Only now could man's ingenuity work at full effectiveness, because it was working on a huge scale with extremely high manufacturing capacity and a record financial turnover; in short, this was a great age. And what was now still missing for universal prosperity and contentment to make this a true Happy New Age? What was preventing the creation of the Utopia we all longed for, where all these technical triumphs and magnificent possibilities would be harvested, where human happiness would combine with newts' industry to open new horizons further and further to beyond what anyone could imagine?

Actually, there was nothing to prevent it; as now trade with the newts would be crowned with the wisdom of the world's most competent administrators, who would also ensure in advance that the machinery of the New Age would run smoothly. In London a conference took place, attended by seafaring nations, where the International Convention on Salamanders was worked out and approved. The high officials who signed the convention agreed to bind themselves not to send their newts into the sovereign waters of other states; not

to allow their newts, in any way, to violate the territorial integrity or acknowledged sphere of interest of any other state; that they would not, in any way, interfere in matters affecting the newts belonging to any other seafaring power; that any dispute between its salamanders and those of another state would be settled by the Court of Arbitration at The Hague; that newts would not be armed with any weapons of a calibre exceeding that which is normal for underwater shark guns; that they would not allow their newts to establish close contact with the salamanders of other sovereign states; that they would not assist their newts in the construction of new land or extending their territory without previous permission from the Standing Marine Commission in Geneva, and so on. (There were thirty-seven paragraphs in all) On the other hand, the British suggestion that marine powers should bind themselves not to oblige their newts to carry out any military exercises was rejected; the French suggestion that the salamanders should be internationalised and subjected to the authority of an international newt commission for regulating world waters was rejected; the German suggestion that every newt should have the symbol of the state to which it belonged branded into its skin was rejected; another German suggestion that every marine state be allowed only a certain number of newts so that the numbers in each state would be in proportion to each other was rejected; the Italian suggestion that states with an excess of salamanders be allocated new shores or areas of the sea bed for colonisation was rejected; the Japanese suggestion that they be given an international mandate to govern the newts as representatives of the coloured races (the newts were by nature black) was rejected. ³² Most of these suggestions were deferred for the next conference of marine powers which, for various reasons, did not take place.

"By this international action," wrote Monsieur Jules Sauerstoff in 'Le Temps', "the future of the newts is assured, along with peaceful development for people for many decades to come. We congratulate the London conference for its successful conclusions on some difficult questions; and we also congratulate the newts that by this statute they come under the protection of the court at The Hague; they will henceforth be able to devote themselves to their work and their underwater progress with a sense of peace and trust. It should be emphasised that the removal of the Newt Problem from the field of politics, which is what the London conference has achieved, is one of the most important assurances we have of world peace; the disarming of the salamanders, in particular, will do a great deal to reduce the likelihood of underwater conflicts between individual

states. The fact is that--even though many border disputes and power struggles continue between states on almost every continent--there is no current threat to world peace, at least not from the direction of the sea. But on dry land, too, we seem to have a better assurance of peace than ever before; the seafaring nations are fully occupied with the construction of new shores and will be able to increase their territory by reclaiming land from the sea instead of trying to extend their frontiers on dry land. There will no longer be any need to fight with iron and gas for every tiny piece of land; all that is needed will be the picks and shovels wielded by the newts for every state to build as much territory as it needs; and it is the London Convention which ensures that the peaceful labour of the newts will bring peace and prosperity for all the nations of the world. The world has never before been so close to a lasting peace and a quiet but glorious efflorescence than now. Instead of the Newt Problem about which so much has been written and said, we will now have good reason to talk of The Golden Age of the Newt'."

Chapter 3

Mister Povondra Reads the Papers Again

There's nothing that makes the passage of time more obvious than seeing our children grow! Where's little Frank now, who we left (so recently, it seems!) on the tributaries on the left bank of the Danube?

"Where's our Frank got to?" grumbled Mr. Povondra as he opened his evening paper.

"You know, same as always," said Mrs. Povondra, bent over her sewing.

"Out chasing after girls again, is he?" said Mr. Povondra disapprovingly. "Damn boy! Nearly thirty years old, he is, and never spends a single evening at home!"

"He certainly gets through his socks fast enough," sighed Mrs. Povondra as she drew another worn-out sock over the wooden last. "Now what am I going to do with this one?" she said as she contemplated a large hole on the heel that resembled the outline of Ceylon. "Better just throw it out, I suppose," she thought critically, but nonetheless, after further strategic considerations, she stuck her needle decisively in at Ceylon's southern coast.

A dignified homely peace reigned for a while, the sort the Povondras were so fond of; there was only the rustle of the newspaper and the fast-moving needle and thread to answer it.

"Have they got him yet?" asked Mrs. Povondra.

"Who?"

"That murderer, the one who killed that woman."

"I can't be bothered with this murderer of yours," grumbled Mr. Povondra with distinct contempt. "I've been reading here about how tensions have erupted between China and Japan. That's a serious matter, that is. It's always a serious matter out there."

"I don't think they're ever going to catch him now," Mrs. Povondra opined.

"Who?"

"That murderer. They don't often catch them when they murder women."

"Japan doesn't like it that China's been regulating the Yellow River. That's politics, that is. For as long as the Yellow River keeps playing up they'll keep on having floods and famines in China, and that keeps China weak. Pass me the scissors, mother, I'll cut this one out."

"What for?"

"'Cause it says here they've got two million newts working on the Yellow River."

"That's a lot, isn't it!"

"I should say so. Mind you, girl, I'm sure it must be America that's paying for it. Why would the Mikado want to put his own newts in there--And look at this!"

"What is it?"

"The Petit Parisien says here that France won't like it at all. And I sure they won't. I wouldn't like it either."

"What wouldn't you like, dear?"

"For Italy to extend the island of Lampedusa. That's a very important strategic position, that is. Italy would be able to threaten Tunis from there. And the Petit Parisien says that Italy wants to turn the island into a first class marine fortress, that there are sixty thousand armed newts already there--Just think of that! Sixty thousand; that's three divisions, mother. There's something going to happen down there in the Mediterranean if you ask me. Have a look yourself; I'll cut it out for you."

In the meantime Ceylon had disappeared under the industrious needle of Mrs. Povondra and reduced itself to no more than the proportions of Rhodes.

"And there's England, too, don't forget," Mr. Povondra considered. "They're

going to have their troubles, too. In the House of Commons they've been taking about how Great Britain will be left behind all the other states where water constructions are concerned. They say all the other colonial powers are building new shorelines and reclaiming new land all the time while the British government is too conservative and won't trust the newts. And that's quite true, mother. Very conservative they are, the English. I knew someone once who worked at the British embassy, and he would never let our Czech sausage past his lips, not for the life of him. Said they didn't eat it in England so he wouldn't eat it here. I'm not surprised other countries are getting ahead of them." Mr. Povondra nodded his head earnestly. "And there's France extending its coastline out by Calais. So now there's panic on in England that the French might start shooting at them across the Channel if the Channel gets any narrower. That's what it comes to. There's nothing to stop them extending their own coast off Dover and then they should shoot at France."

"Why would they want to do that, dear?" asked Mrs. Povondra.

"You don't understand these things. These are military matters. I wouldn't be surprised if there was some trouble there. And if not there it'll be somewhere else. It stands to reason, mother, with all these newts the world situation is entirely different. Entirely different."

"Do you think there's going to be a war?" asked Mrs. Povondra uneasily. "I wouldn't want our Frank to get mixed up in any war."

"War?" thought Mr. Povondra. "It'd have to be a world war so that the world powers could divide the sea between themselves. We'll stay neutral, though. Somebody has to stay neutral so that they can supply arms and all that to the others. That's how it works," concluded Mr. Povondra. "But you women don't understand these things."

Mrs. Povondra pressed her lips together and, with a few quick strokes of her needle, finished the elimination of Ceylon from young Frank's sock. "And just think," said Mr. Povondra with hardly suppressed pride, "this dangerous situation wouldn't have arisen if it hadn't been for me! If I hadn't let that sea captain in to see Mr. Bondy that time then the whole course of history would have been different. There are other doormen who wouldn't have let him in, but I said to myself, I'll take on that responsibility. And now look, you've even got

countries like England and France having trouble because of it! And there's still no knowing what might happen next." Mr. Povondra drew vigorously on his pipe. "That's how it is, my love. The papers are full of stories about the newts. Here's another one, look," Mr. Povondra put down his pipe, "it says here that newts have attacked some village near the city of Kankesanturai in Ceylon; seems the natives had been going out and killing them. The police and a squad of the local militia were called in," read Mr. Povondra read, "and then there was a proper shooting match between the newts and the people. Several of the soldiers were injured..." Mr. Povondra put down his paper. "I don't like the sound of that, mother."

"Why's that, then?" asked Mrs. Povondra as she carefully and contentedly clicked the scissors over the place where the island of Ceylon had been. "After all, there's nothing there!"

"I don't know about that," exclaimed Mr. Povondra as he stood up and began to pace anxiously up and down the living room. "I don't like the sound of that at all. Newts and people shooting at each other; you can't have that sort of thing going on."

"Maybe these newts were just trying to defend themselves," laughed Mrs. Povondra as she put the socks away.

"Exactly," grumbled Mr. Povondra uneasily. "If these horrors start trying to defend themselves things are going to turn bad. It's the first time they've done that....Oh my God, I don't like the sound of that!" Mr. Povondra stopped pacing and stood in thought. "I don't know but...maybe I should never have let that sea captain in to see Mr. Bondy!"

Book Three

The War with the Newts

Chapter 1

Massacre on the Coconut Isles

In one thing, Mr. Povondra was mistaken: the shots exchanged at Kankesanturai were not the first conflict between people and newts. The first known skirmish had taken place some years before on the Coconut Isles in the golden age of pirate raids on the salamanders; but even that was not the oldest incident of this sort and in the ports of the Pacific Ocean there was much talk about certain regrettable cases when newts had offered any kind of resistance, sometimes even to the normal S-Trade; although petty incidents such as these are not written about in the history books.

On the Coconut Isles, or Keeling Isles, this is what happened: The Montrose, a raiding ship operated by Harriman's Pacific Trade Company and under the captaincy of James Lindley, sailed in for one of its usual newt gathering expeditions of the sort known as a Macaroni Run. The Coconut Isles were well known for a bay with a large newt population settled there by Captain van Toch himself but which, because of its remoteness, was left, as they say, to its own devices. No-one could accuse Captain Lindley of any lack of care and attention, not even in that the men who went on shore were not armed. (At that time the trade in hunting newts had already taken on a standard form; it is true, of course, that the pirate ships had earlier used to equip themselves with machine guns and even light cannons, although they were not intended for use against the newts but against unfair competition from other pirates. One day however, off the island of Karakelong, one of Harrimans steamers came up against a Danish ship whose captain considered the hunting grounds of Karakelong as his territory; so the two sides settled some old accounts to do with their prestige and some trading disputes by leaving the newts alone and starting to fire at each other with their rifles and Hotchkiss guns; on land, victory went to the Danes after their successful knife attack but the Harriman ship then had its success by firing its cannons at the Danish ship and sinking it with all hands, including Captain Nielsen. This became known as the Karakelong Incident. So then governments and officials of the relevant countries had to become involved; pirate ships were from then on forbidden to use cannons, machine guns or hand grenades; the companies involved also allocated what they called the free hunting ground

among themselves so that any one newt settlement would only ever be visited by a certain raiding ship; this gentleman's agreement among the great pirates was adhered to and respected even by the smallest raiding businesses.) But to return to Captain Lindley, he conducted himself entirely in accordance with commercial and marine practices of the time when he sent his men out to gather newts armed only with sticks and oars, and the later official enquiry gave the dead captain full satisfaction in that respect.

The men who went down to the Coconut Isles that moonlit night were under the command of Lieutenant Eddie McCarth, who was already experienced in this sort of newt-gathering expedition. It is true that the herd of newts they found on the shore was exceptionally large, estimated at between six and seven hundred strong and fully grown males, whereas Lieutenant McCarth had only sixteen men at his command; but it cannot be said that he failed to do his duty, partly because the officers and ratings on the pirate ships were paid, it was said, according to how many newts they captured. In the ensuing enquiry by the marine authorities it was found that "although Lieutenant McCarth is responsible for this unhappy incident it is quite clear that no-one else would have acted differently under the circumstances". The unfortunate young officer had, in fact, shown remarkable prudence in that instead of slowly surrounding the newts, which, given their numbers, could not have been fully achieved, he ordered a sudden attack with the intention of cutting the newts off from the sea, forcing them inland and stunning them one by one with a blow to the head with a club or an oar. Unfortunately, when the attack took place the sailors were separated from each other and nearly two hundred salamanders escaped into the water. While the attacking men were processing those newts which had been prevented from reaching the sea they began to hear shots behind themselves from shark guns; no-one had any idea that these wild and natural newts on the Keeling Isles were equipped with weapons against sharks and no-one ever found out who had given them to them.

One of the deck hands, Michael Kelly, who had survived the whole catastrophe, said: "When we heard the first shots we thought it must be some other ship that had come to hunt for newts like we had. Lieutenant McCarth turned round quick and shouted, 'What are you doing, you fools, this is the crew of the Montrose here!' Then he was hit in the side, but he still pulled out his revolver and started shooting. Then he got a second shot in the neck and he fell. Then we saw for the

first time that it was the newts firing at us and trying to cut us off from the sea. Then Long Steve raised his oar and rushed out at the newts shouting Montrose! Montrose! so we all started shouting Montrose! and thumping at these horrors with oars or whatever we could. There was about five of us left lying there, but the rest of us fought our way down to the water. Long Steve jumped in and waded out to the boat; but when he got there some of the newts grabbed hold of him and pulled him down under the water. They drowned Charlie and all; he shouted to us Lads, Jesus Christ lads, don't let them get me, but there was nothing we could do. Those vermin were shooting us in the back; Bodkin turned round and he got it in the belly, all he said was Oh no! and he fell. So we all tried to get back inland to the interior of the island; wed already broken all our oars and sticks on these monsters, so all we did was run like rabbits. By then, there was only the four of us left. We didn't dare go any further away from the shore in case we couldn't get back on board ship; we hid behind some stones and bushes and had to look on while the newts finished off our mates. Drowned them in the water like kittens, they did, and if anyone still tried to swim they gave him one on the head with a crowbar. It was only then I saw I had a twisted ankle and couldn't run any further."

Captain James Lindley, who had remained on board the Montrose, must have heard the gunfire from the island; whether he thought there was some trouble with the natives or that there were some other newt traders there, he simply took the cook and two of the stokers who had stayed on board, had the machine gun (which was clearly hidden on the ship despite being strictly forbidden) put on the remaining boat, and went out to help his crewmen. He was careful not to set foot on the shore; he merely went close in the boat with the machine gun ready on its prow and stood there with folded arms for all to see. Let us allow Mister Kelly to explain further.

"We didn't want to call out to the captain so that the newts wouldn't find us. Mister Lindley stood in the boat with his arms folded and called out, What's going on here? Then the newts turned round to look at him. There was a couple of hundred of them on the shore, and more and more of them kept swimming up from the sea and surrounded the boat. What's going on here? the captain asked, and then a big newt went up close to him and said, Go back! The captain just looked at him, he didn't say anything for a while and then he asked, Are you a newt?

We are newts, said this newt. Now please, go back!

I want to see what you've been doing with my men, said the old man. You should not have attacked us, said the newt. You will now, please, go back to your ship! The captain didn't say anything again for a while, and then he calmly said,

Alright Jenkins, fire! And Stoker Jenkins started firing at the newts with the machine gun."

(Later, at the official enquiry, the affair was described in these words: In this respect, Captain James Lindley did no more than we are entitled to expect from a British seaman.)

"All the newts were together in a group," Kelly's testimony continued, "and so they fell like corn in a field. Some of them shot at Mr. Lindley with those guns of theirs, but he stood there with his arms folded and didn't even move. Just then a black newt came out of the water just behind the boat, and it had something in its paw something like a tin can, with its other paw it pulled something out of it and threw it into the water under the boat. After about five seconds there was a column of water came up and there was a loud bang, but sort of muffled sounding, and we could feel how it made the ground shake under our feet."

(From Kelly's description, the official enquiry concluded that the newts had used an explosive known as W3, supplied to them for removing rock from under the water at the fortification works in Singapore, but it remained a mystery how it came into the hands of the newts on the Coconut Isles. There were some who surmised that the explosives were given them by people, others supposed the newts themselves must already have had some long distance communications. Public opinion clamoured for a ban on giving the newts such dangerous explosives; however the appropriate office declared that there was still no other explosive that was as "highly effective and relatively safe" as W3, and that's how things were left.)

"The boat flew up into the air," Kelly's testimony continued, "and was ripped to pieces. All the newts, the ones that were still alive, rushed up to the place. We couldn't really see whether Mr. Lindley was dead or alive; but all three of my shipmates--Donovan, Burke and Kennedy--jumped up and went to help him so

that he wouldn't fall into the hands of those newts. I wanted to run up as well but I had that twisted ankle so I sat where I was and pulled on my foot with both hands to try and get the bones in the right place. So I don't know what happened next, but when I looked up there was Kennedy lying there face down in the sand and there was no sign at all of Donovan or Burke; there was just still something going on in the water."

Kelly then escaped deeper into the island until he found a native village; but the natives behaved strangely towards him and were unwilling even to offer him shelter; perhaps they were afraid of the newts. It was only seven weeks later that the Montrose was found, entirely plundered and abandoned, at anchor off the CoconutIsles by a fishing boat which rescued Kelly.

Some weeks later, a British gunboat, HMS Fireball, sailed to the Coconut Isles and spent the night waiting at anchor. It was once again full moon, and the newts came out of the sea, took up their places in a circle on the sand and began their ceremonial dance. Then His Majesty's Ship fired its first rounds of grapeshot into them. Those newts that weren't cut to pieces immediately stiffened and then fled into the water; that was when the six cannons thundered out their terrible salvo and the only newts left were the few that still crawled towards the water on their broken limbs. Then there was another salvo from the cannons, and then a third.

When that had ended, HMS Fireball withdrew to half a mile offshore and began to fire into the water as it slowly sailed up and down the coast. This lasted six hours and used about eight hundred rounds of ammunition. Then the Fireball sailed away. Over the following two days, the whole of the sea around the Keeling Isles was covered with the dismembered remains of thousands and thousands of newts.

That same night a battleship from Holland, the Van Dijck, fired three rounds into a colony of newts on the island of Goenong Api; the Japanese cruiser Hakodate shot three grenades onto the little newt island of Ailinglaplap; the French gunboat, Bechamel, disrupted the newts dance on the island of Rawaiwai with three shots. This was a warning to the newts. It was not in vain; there was no further incident anywhere comparable with the Keeling Killing, and the trade in newts, both organised and freelance, was able to flourish without disturbance and with official blessing.

Chapter 2

Skirmish in Normandy

A conflict that took place in Normandy somewhat later had a quite different character. The newts there, most of whom worked in Cherbourg and lived on the surrounding beaches, had become very fond of apples. Their employers, though, were unwilling to provide them with anything but the usual newt food (they said it would raise construction costs above the projected budget) and so the newts began to undertake scrumping raids in the nearby orchards. The land owners complained about it to the prefecture and the newts were strictly forbidden to go anywhere on the beach outside the designated newt area, but this was of no help; the orchards continued to suffer steady losses, eggs seemed to disappear from the chicken coops, and every morning more and more guard dogs were found dead. So the villagers began to guard their orchards themselves, armed with ancient shotguns, and shot the poaching newts. It would have remained just a local matter; but the people of Normandy were also annoyed that their taxes had been raised and the price of ammunition had gone up, so they developed a deadly malice towards the newts and undertook raids against them in heavily armed gangs. When they had shot a large number of newts even while they were at work, the newt's employers complained to the prefecture and the prefect ordered that the villagers should have their rusty old guns taken away. The villagers of course resisted, and there were unpleasant conflicts between them and the gendarmes; the stubborn Normans were no longer just shooting at the newts but also, now, at the police. Reinforcements were sent out to Normandy and carried out a house to house search.

It was just about at this time that there was a very unpleasant incident near Coutances: a group of local lads attacked a newt who, they claimed, had been acting suspiciously near a hen coop. They surrounded him with his back against the wall of a barn and began to throw bricks at him. The injured salamander raised his hand and threw down something that looked like an egg; there was an explosion which ripped not only the newt to pieces but also three of the lads: eleven year old Pierre Cajus, sixteen year old Marcel BÃ©rard and fifteen year old Louis Kermadec; and there were also five other children seriously injured to varying degrees. The news quickly spread throughout the region; about seven

hundred people came in buses from all around and attacked the newt colony in the bay of Basse Coutances, armed with shotguns, pitchforks and flails. Around twenty newts were killed before the police were able to subdue the angry crowd. Sappers called in from Cherbourg surrounded the bay with barbed wire; but that night the salamanders came out of the sea, destroyed the barbed wire fences with hand grenades and tried to make their way inland. Several companies of soldiers with machine guns were quickly brought in on lorries and a chain of troops was used to try and keep the newts separate from people. Meanwhile, the people were attacking the finance offices and police stations and one unpopular tax inspector was hanged on a lamppost with a placard saying: Away with the Newts! The newspapers, especially those in Germany, talked about a revolution in Normandy; although the government in Paris issued vehement denials.

While the bloody skirmishes between people and newts spread along the coast of Calvados into Picardy and Pas de Calais, the ageing French cruiser, Jules Flambeau, sailed out of Cherbourg towards the western coast of Normandy; it was later found that the cruiser was only intended to calm and reassure the local inhabitants and the newts. The Jules Flambeau dropped anchor a mile and a half from the bay of Basse Coutances; when night came, in order to create a stronger impression, the captain order coloured rockets to be set off. This beautiful spectacle was watched by a large number of people on the shore; suddenly there was a hissing noise and an enormous column of water rose at the bow of the ship; it keeled over and there was a terrible explosion. It was clear that the cruiser was sinking; within a quarter of an hour motor boats had come out from the nearby ports to offer help but they were not needed; apart from three men killed in the explosion itself the whole crew was saved and the Jules Flambeau went down five minutes later, its captain being the last to leave the ship with the memorable words, "There's nothing we can do".

The official report, issued that same night, announced that the "ageing cruiser, the Jules Flambeau, which was anyway to be withdrawn from service within a few weeks from now, hit rocks while sailing by night and, with its boiler exploding, sank", but the press were not so easily satisfied; while the government influenced press maintained that the ship had hit a recently laid German mine, the opposition and foreign press carried headlines such as:

FRENCH CRUISER TORPEDOED by newts!

MYSTERIOUS EVENTS off the coast of Normandy

NEWTs IN REVOLT!

"We call to account," wrote one French member of parliament in his paper, "those who gave arms to the newts that they could use against people; who put bombs in their paws so that they could kill French villagers and children as they play; who gave these monstrosities from the sea the most modern torpedoes so that they could sink French shipping whenever they want. Let us call them to account, I say: let them be indicted for murder, let them be dragged before a military tribunal for treason, let them be investigated for us to learn how much they profited from supplying the rabble of the oceans with the weapons to attack civilisation!" And so on; there was simply a general consternation, people gathered on the streets and began to build barricades; Senegalese riflemen, their guns stacked in pyramids, were stationed on the boulevards of Paris, and waiting in the suburbs were tanks and armoured cars. This was when the minister for marine affairs, Monsieur François Ponceau, stood in parliament, pale but decisive, and declared: The government accepts the responsibility for having equipped newts on French territory with guns, underwater machine guns, and torpedoes. French newts, however, are equipped only with light, small calibre cannons; German salamanders are armed with 32cm. underwater mortars. On French coasts there is only one underwater arsenal of hand grenades, torpedoes and explosives every twenty-four kilometres on average, on Italian coasts there are deep-water depots of armaments every twenty kilometres and in German waters every eighteen kilometres. France cannot leave her shores unprotected and will not do so. It is not possible for France to simply stop arming her newts. the minister would issue instructions for the most thorough investigations possible to discover who is guilty for the fatal misunderstanding on the Normandy coast; it seems that the newts saw the coloured rockets as a signal for military action and wished to defend themselves. The captain of the Jules Flambeau and the prefect of Cherbourg were both removed from their positions; a special commission was set up to ascertain how businesses involved in water works treated their newts with the expectation that that they would come under strict supervision in future. The government deeply regretted the loss of human lives; Pierre Cajus, Marcel Bœnard and Louis Kermadec would be decorated as national heroes, buried at government expense and their parents rewarded with a large sum of money. Substantial changes were made at the highest level to the

way French shipping was managed. The government put a motion of no-confidence in the National Assembly, to be settled when more information was available, and the cabinet announced that it would remain in permanent session.

The newspapers, according to their political colour, urged punishment, eradication, colonisation or a crusade against the newts, a general strike, resignation of the government, the arrest of newt owners, the arrest of communist leaders and agitators and many other protective measures of this sort. People began frantically to stockpile food when rumours of the shores and ports being closed off began to spread, and the prices of goods of every sort soared; riots caused by rising prices broke out in the industrial cities; the stock exchange was closed for three days. It was simply the more worrying and dangerous than it had been at any time over the previous three or four months. But this was when the minister for agriculture, Monsieur Monti, stepped dexterously in. He gave orders that several hundred loads of apples for the newts should be discharged into the sea twice a week along the French coasts, at government cost, of course. This measure was remarkably successful in pacifying both the newts and the villagers in Normandy and elsewhere. But Monsieur Monti went even further: there had long been deep and serious disturbances in the wine-growing regions, resulting from a lack of turnover, so he ordered that the state should provide each newt with a half litre of white wine per day. At first the newts did not know what to do with this wine because it caused them serious diarrhoea and they poured it into the sea; but with a little time they clearly became used to it, and it was noticed that from then on the newts would show a lot more enthusiasm for sex, although with lower fertility rates than before. In this way, problems to do with the newts and with agriculture were solved in one stroke; fear and tension were assuaged, and, in short, the next time there was another government crisis, caused by the financial scandal around Madame TÃ¶ppler, the clever and well proven Monsieur Monti became the minister for marine affairs in the new cabinet.

Chapter 3

Incident in the English Channel

Not long afterwards, a Belgian ferry, the Oudenbourg, was steaming its way from Ostende to Ramsgate. In the straits of Dover the duty officer noticed that half a mile south of its usual course there was something going on in the water. He could not be sure that there was no-one drowning there and so he ordered a change of course down to where the perturbation was taking place. Two hundred passengers on the windward side of the ship were shown a very strange spectacle: in some places a vertical jet of water shot out from the surface, and in some of those vertical jets there could be seen something like a black body thrown up with it; the surface of the sea for one or two hundred yards all around was tossing and seething wildly while, from the depths, a loud rattling and humming could be heard. "It was as if there was a small volcano erupting under the sea." As the Oudenbourg slowly approached the place an enormous wave rose about ten yards ahead of it and a terrible noise thundered out like an explosion. The entire ship was lifted violently and the deck was showered with a rain of water that was nearly boiling hot; and landing on the deck with the water was a strong black body which writhed and let out a sharp loud scream; it was a newt that had been injured and burnt. The captain ordered the ship full steam astern so that the ship would not steam straight into the middle of this turbulent Hell; but the water all around had also begun to erupt and the surface of the sea was strewn with pieces of dismembered newts. The ship was finally able to turn around and it fled northwards as fast as possible. Then there was a terrible explosion about six hundred yards to the stern and a gigantic column of water and steam, perhaps a hundred yards high, shot out of the sea. The Oudenbourg set course for Harwich and sent out a radio warning in all directions: "Attention all shipping, attention all shipping! Severe danger on Ostende-Ramsgate lane. Underwater explosion. Cause unknown. All shipping advised avoid area!" All this time the sea was thundering and boiling, almost as if military manoeuvres had been taking place under the water; but apart from the erupting water and steam there was nothing to see. From both Dover and Calais, destroyers and torpedo boats set out at full steam and squadrons of military aircraft flew to the site of the disturbance; but by the time they got there all they found was that the surface was discoloured with something like a yellow mud and covered with

startled fish and newts that had been torn to pieces. At first it was thought that a mine in the channel must have exploded; but once the shores on both sides of the Straits of Dover had been ringed off with a chain of soldiers and the English prime-minister had, for the fourth time in the history of the world, interrupted his Saturday evening and hurried back to London, there were those who thought the incident must be of extremely serious international importance. The papers carried some highly alarming rumours, but, oddly enough, this time remained far from the truth; nobody had any idea that Europe, and the whole world with it, stood for a few days on the brink of a major war. It was only several years later that a member of the then British cabinet, Sir Thomas Mulberry, failed to be re-elected in a general election and published his memoirs setting out just what had actually happened; but by then, though, nobody was interested.

This, in short, is what happened: Both England and France had begun constructing underwater fortresses for the newts in the English Channel. By means of these fortresses it would have been possible, in case of war, to close it off to shipping entirely. Then, of course, both great powers accused the other of having started it first; but in all probability both sides began fortification at the same time in the fear that the friendly neighbour across the channel might get there before they did. In short, two enormous concrete fortresses armed with heavy cannons, torpedoes, extensive minefields and all that modern weapon technology could give them, had been growing steadily under the surface of the Straits of Dover; on the English side this terrible fortress of the deep was operated by two divisions of heavy newts and around thirty thousand working salamanders, on the French side there were three divisions of first class warrior newts. It seems that on the critical day, a working colony of British newts came across French salamanders on the seabed in the middle of the strait and some kind of misunderstanding developed. The French insisted that their newts had been working peacefully when they were attacked by the British who wanted to repel them, that British armed newts had tried to abduct some French newts who, of course, had defended themselves. At this, British military salamanders began firing into French labouring newts with hand grenades and mortars so that the French newts were forced to use similar weapons. The government of France felt compelled to require full satisfaction from His Britannic Majesty's government and complete withdrawal from the disputed area of the seabed in order to ensure that no similar incident would occur again in the future.

On the other hand, the British government sent a special note to the government of the French Republic informing them that French militarised newts had entered the English half of the channel and were about to lay down mines there. The British newts pointed out that they were in their working area; at which the French salamanders, armed to the teeth, responded by throwing hand grenades which killed several working newts on the British side. It was with regret that His Majesty's Government felt obliged to require full satisfaction from the government of the French Republic and the assurance that French military newts would never again enter the British side of the English Channel.

At this the French government declared that it could no longer tolerate having a neighbouring state building underwater fortifications in immediate proximity to the French coast. As far as a misunderstanding on the bed of the English Channel was concerned the republic suggested that, in accordance with the London Convention, the dispute be presented to the international court in The Hague. The British government replied that it could not and would not subject the security of British coasts to decisions made by any external body. As victims of the French attack they once again required, and with all possible emphasis, an apology, payment for damages and a guarantee for the future. British shipping stationed at Malta steamed westward at full speed; the Atlantic fleet was given orders to assemble at Portsmouth and Yarmouth.

The French government ordered the mobilisation of its naval reserve.

It now seemed that neither side could give way; it clearly meant after all nothing less than mastery over the entire channel. At this critical moment Sir Thomas Mulberry discovered the surprising fact that there actually were no working newts or military newts operating on the English side, or at least not officially, as the British Isles were still bound by Sir Samuel Mandeville's prohibition on any salamander working on British coasts or surface waters. This meant that the British government could not officially maintain that French newts had attacked any English newts; the whole issue therefore was reduced to the question whether French newts, deliberately or in error, had crossed over into British sovereign waters. French officials promised that they would investigate the matter; the English government never even suggested that the matter should be presented to the international court in The Hague. Finally the British admiralty came to an agreement with the French admiralty that there would be a five kilometre wide neutral zone between underwater fortifications in the English

Channel, and in this way the exceptional friendliness existing between the two states was confirmed.

Chapter 4

The Northern Newt

Not many years after the first newt colonies had been settled in the North Sea and the Baltic a German scientist, Dr. Hans Thuring, found that the Baltic newt had certain distinctive physical features--clearly as a result of its environment; that it was somewhat lighter in colour, it walked on two legs, and its cranial index indicated a skull that was longer and narrower than other newts. This variety was given the name Northern Newt or Noble Newt (*Andrias Scheuchzeri* var. *nobilis erecta* Thuring).

The German press took this Baltic newt as its own, and enthusiastically stressed that it was because of its German environment that this newt had developed into a different and superior sub-species, indisputably above the level of any other salamander. Journalists wrote with contempt of the degenerate newts of the Mediterranean, stunted both physically and mentally, of the savage newts of the tropics and of the inferior, barbaric and bestial newts of other nations. The slogan of the day was From the Great Newt to the German Aëbernewt. And what had been the origin of all the latter day newts on German soil? Had its glorious miocene skull not been found in Aëhningen by the learned German Doctor Johannes Jakob Scheuchzer? There was therefore not the slightest doubt that the original *Andrias Scheuchzeri* had had its origin in the geological past on German soil; its migration to other seas and climatic zones was something it had had to pay for with its decline and degeneration; but as soon as it found itself back on the soil of its homeland it once again became what it had been in the past: the noble northern Scheuchzer Newt, light in colour, erect in gait and long in skull. It was only on German soil that newts could return to their pure and highest form, such as it had been found by the great Johannes Jakob Scheuchzer from the impression in the quarry at Aëhningen. This was why Germany needed new and longer shores, it needed colonies, it needed the seas of the world so that a new generation of racially pure, original German salamanders could develop in German waters. We need new living room for our newts, wrote the German newspapers; and so that this fact was always present to the German eyes a grand memorial to Johannes Jakob Scheuchzer was set up in Berlin. The great doctor was depicted with a thick book in his hand; at his sits the erect and noble Nordic

newt, gazing into the distance towards the boundless shores of the worlds oceans. There was, of course, a celebratory speech given at the unveiling of this national monument, and it attracted the attention of newspapers all around the world. A New Threat from Germany, asserted, in particular, the press in England. We have become used to this sort of tone but if, on an official occasion such as this, we are told that Germany is in need of five thousand kilometres of new coastline within three years we have to choose but to give a clear response: Just You Try It! See what happens if you encroach on British shores. We are prepared, and in three years time we will be even better prepared. England must have--and will have-- a navy as large as the two biggest continental powers put together; this relation of power cannot ever be changed. Anyone who wishes to unleash an insane arms race in naval weaponry is welcome to try; no Briton will ever allow his country to fall a single step behind.

"We accept the challenge laid down by the Germans," declared the first lord of the admiralty, Sir Francis Drake, in parliament and speaking on behalf of the government. "Whoever tries to lay a hand on any of the worlds oceans will have to find himself facing the might of our ships. The British Empire is strong enough to repel any assault on its outposts or the shores of its colonies and dominions. The construction of new land, island, fortress or airbase in any sea will be considered an attack of this sort if its waves wash onto coastline under British dominion, however tiny. Let this be the last warning to anyone who might wish to change the outline of the world's seas, even if by no more than a yard." In response, parliament allowed the construction of new warships at a preliminary cost of half a million pounds sterling. It was indeed an impressive response to the construction of the provocative memorial to Johannes Jakob Scheuchzer in Berlin; this memorial had cost no more than twelve thousand reichsmark.

The outstanding French publicist, the Marquis de Sade, who was always well informed, responded to this speech in this way: The British first lord of the admiralty declares that Great Britain is ready for any eventuality. That is all well and good, but is the noble lord aware that Germany has a standing army of heavily armed newts in the Baltic, currently comprising five million professional salamander soldiers, who are ready to engage in military action at any time on land or sea? On top of that must be considered the seventeen million newts engaged in technical and supportive functions who act as a reserve and are

ready, at any time, to become an army of occupation? The Baltic salamander is presently the greatest soldier in the world; trained to the perfect mentality, it sees war is its proper vocation and the most noble; it enters every battle with the enthusiasm of a fanatic, with cool technical planning and the awful discipline of Prussia.

And is the British First Lord of the Admiralty moreover aware that Germany is frantically building new transport ships, any one of which can carry a whole brigade of warrior salamanders? Is he aware that hundreds and hundreds of small submarines are being built with a range of three to five thousand kilometres and whose crew will consist of Baltic newts? Is he aware that gigantic underwater fuel depots are being established in various places? So now, let us ask the question once again: can the British citizen be certain that his great country really is well prepared for any eventuality?

It is not difficult to imagine, the Marquis de Sade continued, what a difference could be made to the outcome the next war by newts blockading the coasts and equipped with underwater howitzers, mortars and torpedoes; by my faith, this is the first time in history that no-one need envy the English in their splendid isolation surrounded by water. And while we are addressing these questions: is the British admiralty aware also that the Baltic newts are equipped with a new, normally peaceful, apparatus called the pneumatic drill which is capable of drilling ten metres deep into the best Swedish granite in an hour and can penetrate fifty or sixty metres deep into English chalk in the same time? (This was ascertained by secret experiments carried out at night by the German technical expedition on the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth of last month on the English coast between Hythe and Folkestone right under the nose of Dover Castle.) I suggest that our friends across the channel calculate for themselves how many weeks it would take for Kent or Essex to be drilled through below sea level like a piece of Swiss cheese. Until now, the Englishman on his island has always looked anxiously to the horizon as the place from which any harm to his flourishing cities, his Bank of England or his warm cottage, so cosy in its evergreen coat of ivy, might come. But now he had better put his ear to the ground where his children are playing: might he not hear, maybe today, maybe tomorrow, a digging and a scraping as, step by step, the newts with these tireless and fearsome drills grind their way deeper to create the paths for laying hitherto unknown explosives. The last word of the age we live in is not war in the air, it

is war beneath the water and the land. We have heard the self confident words from the commanders of proud Albion; the ship of Albion today is still a vessel of great power, borne on the waves and master of them; but there might come a day when the waves will close over a vessel that has been broken and send it down to the depths of the ocean. Would it not be better to face this danger sooner rather than later? Within three years it will be too late!

The Marquis de Sade was a brilliant publicist, and his warning caused great consternation in England; despite all the denials, people in every part of England were able to hear the newts drilling into the ground beneath their feet. Officials in Germany, of course, issued a categorical denial and repudiated the Marquis' speech, declaring that from start to finish it was no more than provocation and hostile propaganda; at the same time, however, combined manoeuvres were taking place in the Baltic involving the German navy, land forces and warrior newts; squads of sapper newts, in full view of foreign military attachÃ©s, underdrilled and blew up six square kilometres of sand dunes near RÃ¼genwald. It was said to be a wonderful spectacle when, with a terrifying roar, the ground rose up and an enormous wall of steam, sand and tree trunks flew skywards; it became as dark as night, and the sand that had been thrown up was scattered over a radius of nearly fifty kilometres, even as far away as Warsaw there was still a sandy rain falling several days later. This enormous explosion left so much fine sand and dust suspended in the atmosphere that all through the rest of that year the sunsets throughout Europe were exceptionally beautiful, coloured a bloody red, and fiery like never before. The sea created after this piece of coast had been blown away was later given the name the Scheuchzer See, and it was the destination for countless school trips for German children singing their favourite newt anthem, Solche Erfolge erreichen nur deutsche Molche.

Chapter 5

Wolf Meynert Writes His Oeuvre

It may have been just those tragically glorious sunsets that inspired the lone philosopher, Wolf Meynert, to write his monumental work, *The Decline and Fall of Man*. We can easily imagine him as he ambles along the shore, his hair loose and his raincoat flapping in the wind, gazing enthralled at the sky that has turned into a blaze of fire and blood. "Yes," he mutters absent mindedly, "yes, now is the time to write the afterword to the history of mankind!" And so he wrote it.

The tragedy of the human race has reached its final curtain, Wolf Meynert began. Despite mans lust for enterprise and technical prosperity, all this is no more than the lurid red on the face of an organism already condemned to die. Man has never before come face to face with such an elevated conjuncture in the life of his species than today; but find me one man who is happy; show me the class that lives in contentment, the nation that does not fear its existence under threat. In the midst of all the gifts of civilisation, in the rich luxury of material and spiritual property we are all of us falling inexorably into doubt, anguish and unease. Thus Wolf Meynert went on, with irrefutable logic, to analyse the spiritual state of the modern world, this mix of fear and uncertainty, mistrust and megalomania, cynicism and pettiness: in a word, Wolf Meynert concluded, desperation. Typical portents of the end. Moral agony.

So the question is: When was man ever capable of happiness? Individuals, yes, just like any other living thing; but mankind, never. The whole of mans misfortunes arise because he had to become human, or that he became human too late when he was already incorrigibly differentiated into nations and races and faiths and classes and factions and rich and poor and educated and uneducated and lords and slaves. If you take horses, wolves, sheep, cats, foxes, deer, bears and goats, and you herd them into one fold and force them to live in this nonsensical mix-up that you call the Rules of Society and force them to observe these rules, then the result will be unhappiness, discontent and death, a society where not even a divine being could feel at home. That is a more or less precise depiction of the big and hopeless heterogenous herd that we call mankind. Nations, classes, factions cannot all live together in the long term

without causing each other worries and getting in each others way until it becomes unbearable; they can all live separated from each other--which was only possible for as long as the world was big enough for them--or they can live against each other, in a struggle of life and death. Biological entities such as race, nation and class have only, where people are concerned, one natural road to take, and that is towards a homogenous and undisturbed bliss; to make a place for themselves and annihilate the others. And that is just what the human race failed to do in time. Now it is too late. We have set up too many doctrines and obligations for ourselves with which we protect these "others" instead of getting rid of them; we have thought up a code of morals, human rights, contracts, laws, equality, humanity and all the rest; we have created a fictitious mankind which includes ourselves and these "others" in some imaginary higher unit. What a fatal mistake! We have set our law of morals above the laws of biology. We have violated the great natural assumption of all societies; that only a homogenous society can be a happy society. And this attainable prosperity is something that we have sacrificed to a great but impossible dream: the creation of one mankind and one social and moral code for all people, nations, classes and factions. Grandiose stupidity. In its way it was man's only honourable attempt to rise above himself. And now he has to pay for this supreme idealism with his own inevitable end.

The process by which man tries to organise himself in society is as old as civilisation itself, as old as the first laws and the first communities; after all these millennia, all that he has attained is the deepening of the gulf between races, nations and classes; world opinions have dug themselves deep and firm in the bottomless pit that we see today, and we cannot fail to see that mans unfortunate and historic attempt to make all peoples into one mankind has definitively and tragically collapsed. We are finally beginning to realise it; and that is why there are these plans and efforts to unite human society in a different way, a radical way, the way of making room just for one nation, just for one class or just for one faith. But who can say how deeply we have already been infected with the incurable disease of differentiation? Sooner or later, every supposedly homogenous unit inevitably breaks back down into a disparate jumble of various interests, parties, classes and so on, who will either persecute each other or will suffer together in silence. There is no way out. We are caught in a vicious circle; but history will not continue going round in circles forever. Nature herself has taken care of that by creating a place on Earth for the newts.

It is by more than mere chance, Wolf Meynert went on, that the newts have burgeoned just at the time when mans chronic disease, this badly assembled and quickly decaying super-organism, will progress into agony. With few insignificant exceptions, the newts are the only homogenous and large-scale unit; they have so far failed to create any deep distinctions of race, language, nation, state, faith class or caste; there are no masters and slaves among them, no freemen and serfs, no rich and poor; differences have been imposed upon them by their type of work, but for their own perceptions they are of one family, a monolith, of one seed, in all their parts they have the same primitive biology, the same poor natural endowments, the same burdens, and the same low living standard. The last Negroes and Eskimos have incomparably higher living conditions, enjoy infinitely richer property both materially and culturally, than these billions of civilised newts. And there is not even any indication of suffering among the newts. On the contrary. What we see is that they have no need of any of the things with which man seeks escape and relief from the worries of his life or the horrors of his metaphysics; they survive adequately without philosophy, without life after death and without art; they do not know what are fantasy, humour, mysticism, game-playing or dreams; they go through life simply as realists. They are as remote from man as ants or herrings; and they distinguish themselves from ants and herrings only by having moved over into the environment of another species, the civilisation of man. There they have settled themselves just as dogs have settled into mans shelter; they cannot live without it, but they do not cease to be what they are; a very primitive and little differentiated type of animal. All they wish to do is live and multiply; they might even be happy, for there is no sense of inequality to disturb them. They are simply homogenous. For this reason they might one day, indeed one day very soon, find no difficulty in doing that which has escaped the efforts of man: to disperse their species with its unity intact all around the globe, a single global community, in a word, universal newt-dom. This day will see the end of millennia of agony for the human genus. Our planet will not have enough room for two faction, both of which strive to dominate the whole world. One of them must give way. We know already which that will be.

Distributed around the globe today are around twenty thousand million civilised newts, which is about ten times more than all people put together; it is both a matter of historical logic and biological necessity that the newts that man has subjugated will some day free themselves; that being homogenous they will

unite; and that thus having become the greatest power the world has ever seen they will take over. Could anyone be such a fool as to think they would then spare mankind? Could anyone think they will repeat the mistake, made again and again throughout history, of exploiting the defeated nations and classes instead of just annihilating them? Would it be in their interest to keep establishing new differences between men so that then, simply through generosity and idealism, they would try to overcome them? No, this is a historic error that the newts will not commit, declared Wolf Meynert, if only because they will have been warned in this book! They will be the inheritors of the whole of human civilisation; all that we have done or attempted to do in our efforts to shape the world will simply fall into their laps; but if they tried to include ourselves with this legacy, they would be acting against their own interests. They must rid themselves of mankind if they wish to maintain their own uniformity. If they failed to act thus they would they would create, sooner or later, their own destructive tendency among themselves: they would create differences and they would have to endure them. But this is something of which we should have no fear; there is today no creature that will continue the history of mankind that would repeat his suicidal madness.

There is no doubt that the world of the newts will be happier than that of mankind; it will be unified, homogenous and governed everywhere in the same spirit. Newt will not be distinct from newt by language, opinion, faith or his requisites for life. There will be no differences among them of culture or class, merely the allocation of tasks. No-one will be master or slave, as all will serve just one Great Newt Whole which will be god, government, employer and spiritual leader. There will be just one nation and just one class. The world will be better and more perfect than ours will have been. This is the only possible Brave New World. Let us therefore make room for it; man is facing his expiry, and there is no more that he can do than to hasten his end with tragic beauty, that is, if it is not too late even for that.

Now lets express the views of Wolf Meynert in a way that is more accessible: we are aware that in this way it will lose a lot of its force and its depth, which was so fascinating for the whole of Europe in its time. The young were especially fascinated and adopted a faith in the decline and annihilation of mankind with great enthusiasm. The German Reich banned the teaching of the great pessimist for a number of political reasons and Wolf Meynert had to flee

into Switzerland, but the whole of the educated world was nonetheless content to adopt Meynert's theories about the end of mankind; his book, 632 pages long, was published in all the languages of the world and many millions of copies were distributed, even among the newts.

Chapter 6

X Gives His Warning

It may have been as a result of this prophetic book that the literary and artistic avant garde in all the cultural centres declared, After Us, the Salamanders!, The Future belongs to the Newts, Newts Mean Cultural Revolution. Even if they don't have their own art (they explained) at least they are not burdened with idiotic ideals, dried up traditions and all the rigid and boring things taught in schools and given the name of poetry, music, architecture, philosophy and culture in any of its forms. The word culture is senile and it makes us sick. Human art has been with us for too long and is worn-out and if the newts have never fallen for it we will make a new art for them. We, the young, will blaze the path for a new world of salamandrism: we wish to be the first newts, we are the salamanders of tomorrow! And so the young poetic movement of salamandrism was born, triton--or tritone--music was composed and pelagic painting, inspired by the shape world of jellyfish, fish and corals, made its appearance. There were also the water regulating structures made by the newts themselves which were discovered as a new source of beauty and dignity. We've had enough of nature, the slogans went; bring on the smooth, concrete shores instead of the old and ragged cliffs! Romanticism is dead; the continents of the future will be outlined with clean straight lines and re-shaped into conic sections and rhombuses; the old geological must be replaced with a world of geometry. In short, there was once again a new trend that was to be the thing of the future, a new aesthetic sensation and new cultural manifestoes; anyone who failed to join in with the rise of salamandrism before it was too late felt bitterly that he had missed his time, and he would take his revenge by making calls for the purity of mankind, a return to the values of the people and nature and other reactionary slogans. A concert of tritone music was booed off the stage in Vienna, at the Salon des Indépendants in Paris a pelagic painting called Capriccio en Bleu was slashed by an unidentified perpetrator; salamandrism was simply victorious, and its rise was unstoppable.

Needless to say, there was no shortage of those who were opposed to this change and stood against "newtmania" as it was called. The most fundamentalist piece of opposition came in the form of an anonymous pamphlet that came out in

England under the title X Gives his Warning. The leaflet enjoyed wide circulation, but the identity of its author was never established; there were many who thought it must have been written by some high official in the church, swayed by the observation that X is an abbreviation for Christ.

In the first chapter the author tried to use statistics about the newts, apologising at the same time for the inaccuracy of the figures he was using. The estimated total number of salamanders at this time ranged between seven and twenty times the total number of people on the Earth. It was just as uncertain how many factories, oil wells, weed plantations, and eel farms the newts had under the sea making use of water power and other natural sources of energy; there were not even any estimates of the newts industrial manufacturing capacity; least of all did anyone know how well armed the newts were. We knew that the salamanders were dependent on people for their metals, engineering parts, explosives and many types of chemical, but not only did every state keep strictly secret how much weaponry and other products they supplied to their newts, but we also knew remarkably little about what the newts did with the materials they bought from people once they were down in the depths of the sea. One thing that was certain was that the newts did not want people to know these things; over the previous few years so many divers sent down to the seabed had been drowned that it could not possibly be seen as mere chance. It hardly need be said how worrying this was, both from the industrial point of view and the military. It is obviously very difficult to imagine, X continued in the following paragraphs, what the newts might want of people, or how much they could simply take. They cannot live on dry land and there is no way for us to dictate to them what they do under the water. Our respective living environments are completely and unchangeably separate. We require a certain amount of work from them, but in return we give them plenty of food and provide them with raw materials and products such as metals that, without us, they would not have at all. But even if there is no practical reason for any animosity between ourselves and the newts there is, I would say, metaphysical reason: contrasted with creatures of the surface we see creatures of the deep abyss; creatures of the night with creatures of the day; dark ponds of water with bright, dry land. The boundary between water and land has somehow become sharper than it used to be: our land borders on their water. We could live perfectly well separate from each other, exchanging no more than certain goods and services, indefinitely; but it is hard to rid ourselves of the fear that that is not how things will turn out. And why not?

I am not able to give you any precise reasons; but this fear is nonetheless with us; it seems like some kind of intuition that one day the sea itself will turn against the land to settle the question of who lives with whom.

I have to admit that this anxiety is somewhat irrational, X went on; but it would seem like a great relief if the newts came out against mankind with some kind of demands. We would at least then have the chance to negotiate with them, we would be able to make various concessions, contracts and compromises with them; but this silence of theirs is a thing of horror. This incomprehensible reticence makes me afraid. They might, for instance, wish to ask for certain political advantages for themselves; legislation about the newts is, to put it bluntly, outdated in every state of the world and is not worthy of the dignity of a creature as civilised as the newts nor of a creature so strong in numbers. There is a need to work out new rights and responsibilities for the newts, and to do so in the way that will be of most advantage to them; their working conditions must be improved and they must be better rewarded for the amount of work they do. There are many ways in which their circumstances could be improved if only they would ask for it. Then we would be in a position to make certain concessions and bind ourselves to proper contracts with proper pay; at the very least this would buy time for a number of years. However, the newts ask for nothing; all they do is raise their output and order more supplies; now is the time when we need to ask where, on both sides, this will all come to an end. We used formerly to talk about the yellow peril, or black or red; but they were at least people, and we can at least have some idea of what it is that people will want. But even if we still have no idea how to defend ourselves or even whom we are to defend ourselves against there is one thing that is quite clear: that if the newts stand on one side then the whole of mankind will be on the other.

People against newts! The time has come when it needs to be formulated thus. It must be said frankly that the normal person has an instinctive hatred of the salamanders, he loathes them--and he is afraid of them. There is something like a chill veil of horror that has fallen over the whole of mankind. How else are we to explain this frenetic worldliness, this insatiable thirst for fun and debauchery, this orgiastic abandon that has taken control of peoples minds? There has never been a comparable collapse of morals since the time when the Roman Empire collapsed under the onslaught of the barbarians. This is more than the fruit of unprecedented material prosperity, it is the desperation born of suppressed fear

and anguish at the thought of our own overturn and annihilation. Drink deep the last goblet, for tomorrow we die! What a disgrace, what a punishment! It seems that God, in His terrible mercy, wishes to allow nations and classes to perish if once they have begun to rush down the road to destruction. Are we to read mene tekel in fiery letters at the feast of mankind? Look at the words written in light shining all through the hours of darkness on the walls of our debauched and dissolute cities! In this way we human beings are already comparable with the newts: we live more by night than by day.

If only these salamanders were not so horribly mediocre, exclaimed X in his anxiety. It is true that they are, to some extent, educated, but this has the effect of limiting them further as all that they have taken from human civilisation is that which is the most commonplace and useful, things that are mechanical and repeatable. They stand at the side of man like Wagner at the side of Faust; they learn from these books like the human Faust but with this difference, that this is all they want and suffer from no doubts or questions. The most horrifying thing is that this type of civilised mediocrity, educable but dull and complacent, exists on such a large scale; millions and thousands of millions of individuals all the same; or rather, perhaps I am mistaken, and the most horrifying thing of all is that they have been so successful. They have taught themselves to use machines and numbers, and they have shown that that is all that is needed to become masters of the world. All parts of human civilisation that are without purpose, that are playful, fantastic or antiquated, they have ignored; in this way they have ignored all that makes man human, adopting only that which is purely practical, technical and utilisable. And this pitiful caricature of human civilisation has achieved awesome things; it builds wonders of technology, renovates our old planet and is even a source of fascination of people themselves. From Wagner, his apprentice and servant, Faust learned the secret of success and of mediocrity. Mankind has either to engage in an epoch-making conflict of life and death with the newts or he will become like the newts, never to regain his humanness. As far as I am concerned, X concluded sadly, I would rather see the former.

X now gives you his warning, the unknown author continued. It is still possible to shake off this cold and slimey ring that is wrapped around us all. We must rid ourselves of the salamanders. There are already too many of them; they are armed, we know almost nothing about the power of their weapons and they could well turn them against us; but a danger for us more horrible than mere

strength and numbers is the success, nay triumph, achieved by their lack of self worth. We do not know what it is that we are to fear more; the technology they have taken from human beings, or their sinister, cold and bestial cruelty; but the two of them together create something inconceivably terrifying and almost diabolic. In the name of culture, in the name of Christianity and mankind we must free ourselves from these newts. And here he called on an unnamed apostle:

You madmen, stop feeding the newts! Stop employing them, eschew their services, let them move away somewhere else where they will feed themselves just like any other sea creature! Nature herself has already created order in her copious bounty; but only if people-- human civilisation and human history--will stop working for the salamanders!

And stop providing the newts with weapons, end their supply of metals and explosives, send them no more of the machinery and equipment made by man! We do not give the tiger his teeth or venom to the snake; we do not stoke the fires of volcanoes or undermine our dams. Let us ban supplies to any of the seas of the world, let us place the newts outside the law, let them be cursed and banished from our world, let there be a League of Nations to unite us against the newts! The whole of mankind must be prepared to defend its existence with sword in hand; let the king of Sweden, the Pope of Rome or a union of nations call a world conference to unite all the civilised states of the world, let us create a united world--or at least a union of all Christian nations--wherewith to oppose the salamanders! We are today at a turning point. Under the terrible pressure of the salamander threat, it is possible for man to behave responsibly and create a United States of the World to avoid a world war with all its countless victims. May God will it! If it is His will, then the newts will not have come in vain and will have been the instrument of God.

This pathetic pamphlet excited wide support among the general public. Old women, in particular, agreed that there had been an unprecedented decline in moral values. On the other hand, the business pages of the newspapers pointed out it would not be possible to reduce the goods supplied to the newts without causing a serious decline in human industrial output and a crisis in many other areas. Agriculture had come to depend on an enormous demand for maize, potatoes and other crops used for newt fodder; if the number of salamanders was reduced there would be a sharp decline in the market price of foodstuffs which

would bring farmers to the brink of ruin. The trades unions suspected Mr. X was just a reactionary and declared that they would not allow anything that would impede the supply of goods to the newts; the working man had only just achieved full employment and a proper wage and now Mr. X was wanting to snatch the bread from their hands; the working class is in sympathy with the newts and rejects any attempt to lower their standard of living or deliver them, poor and defenceless, into the hands of capitalism. As far as any League of Nations against the newts was concerned, they denied that there could be any serious political circumstances when it could be needed; there were indeed both the Society of Nations and the London Convention in which seagoing states bound themselves not to equip their newts with heavy weaponry. Needless to say, it is not easy to persuade any state to disarm if it cannot be sure that no other seagoing power is not arming its newts in secret and thereby raising its military power at the expense of its neighbours. Likewise, no state or continent is able to force its newts to move somewhere else, simply because that would have the undesirable effect of raising the industrial and agricultural output, not to mention the military power, of other states and continents. And objections of this sort, which any thinking person would have to acknowledge, were raised everywhere.

Despite all this, the pamphlet, *X Gives his Warning*, had far reaching effects. Movements to oppose the newts spread to almost every country in the world and a variety of organisations such as The Association for the Elimination of the Newts, The Anti-Salamander Club, The Committee for Human Protection were established everywhere. Newt delegates at the thirteenth session of the Commission for the Study of Newt Affairs in Geneva were insulted when they tried to take part. The boards that fenced off the coastline were daubed with threatening graffiti such as Death to the Newts, Salamanders Go Home *etc.* Many newts had stones thrown at them; no salamander now dared to raise his head above water in daylight. But, despite all of this, there was no sign whatever from them of protest or attempt at retaliation. They were simply invisible, by day at least; and the people who peered through the barriers saw no more than the endless and wearily sougning waves. "Just look at these monstrosities," they said with hatred, "they won't even show themselves!"

And it was this tense silence that was suddenly broken by the thunder of the Louisiana Earthquake.

Chapter 7

The Louisiana Earthquake

On that day, on the 11th. November at one o'clock in the morning, there was a powerful earth tremor felt in New Orleans; some of the buildings in the black areas collapsed; people ran out onto the street in panic, but there was no second tremor; there was only a short, howling cyclone that struck with a sudden furious onslaught, smashing windows and blowing the rooves off the houses where the negroes lived; a few dozen people were killed; and then there was a heavy downpour of mud.

As the New Orleans firemen went out to help in the worst affected areas, telegrams were tapped out from Morgan City, Plaquemine, Baton Rouge and Lafayette: SOS! Send help! City half destroyed by earthquake and cyclone; Mississippi dam at risk of breaking; send searchers, ambulances, all able-bodied men immediately!--From Fort Livingston there was only this laconic question: Hello, anything happening there? It was followed by a message from Lafayette: Attention! Attention! Worst affected New Iberia. Connection between Iberia and Morgan City seems broken. Send help there!--Morgan City telephoned in reply: No communications with New Iberia. Roads and railroads seem destroyed. Send ships and airplanes to Vermillion Bay! We need nothing. Have around thirty dead and hundred injured. --Then a telegram came from Baton Rouge: Received news, worst affected New Iberia. Concentrate resources New Iberia. Here need only workers, urgent, dam in danger of breaking. Doing all possible. And then: Hello, hello, Shreveport, Natchitoches, Alexandria sending trains with help to New Iberia. Hello, hello, Memphis, Winana, Jackson sending trains via Orleans. All vehicles heading dam Baton Rouge.--Hello, Pascagoula here. Some dead here. Need help?

By now fire engines, ambulances and trainfuls of helpers and supplies were on their way to Morgan city--Patterson--Franklin. It was not until after four in the morning that the first accurate news arrived: Railroad closed by floods between Franklin and New Iberia, five miles west of Franklin; seems deep fissure opened by earthquake, connects with Vermillion Bay and flooded with seawater. As far as ascertained, fissure extends from Vermillion Bay east-northeast, near Franklin

turns northwards, opens into Grand Lake, continues northwards until line Plaquemine--Lafayette, ending in former lake; second branch fissure connects Grand Lake westwards with Napoleonville Lake. Fissure around fifty miles total length, width one to seven miles. Epicenter apparently here. Seems amazing luck fissure missed all major towns. Loss of life nonetheless substantial. In Franklin twenty-four inches rain of mud, in Patterson eighteen inches. Reports from Atchafalaya Bay, sea retreated two miles at time of earthquake, then hundred foot tidal wave. Feared many dead on coast. Still no communication with New Iberia.

Meanwhile a train carrying supplies from Natchitoches entered New Iberia from the west; the first reports, sent by a roundabout route via Lafayette and Baton Rouge, were awful. The train had not been able to get closer than a few miles from New Iberia because the track had been swept away by the mud. As people fled from the disaster they reported that a volcano of mud had erupted a couple of miles to the east of the town and instantly drenched the area with a thin, cold rain of it; New Iberia, they said, had disappeared under an onslaught of mud. All work was made extremely difficult by the dark and the continuing rain of mud. There was still no direct connection with New Iberia.

At the same time, news arrived from Baton Rouge:

thousands of men working on mississippi dam stop if only rain would stop stop
need picks shovels trucks workers stop sending help to plaquemine

Dispatch from Fort Jackson:

one thirty morning sea wave destroyed thirty houses don't know what it was
approximately seventy people swept to sea only now repaired equipment post
office destroyed hello wire saying what happened urgent telegrapher fred dalton
hello please tell minnie im ok apart from broken hand and loss of clothes but at
least equipment ok fred

The report from Port Eads was somewhat shorter:

some dead burywood swept entirely to sea

By about eight in the morning the first aircraft sent to help the affected areas had

returned. The whole of the coast from Port Arthur (Texas) to Mobile (Alabama) had been hit by a tidal wave; ruined or damaged buildings were everywhere. The south-eastern part of Louisiana (from the road between Lake Charles and Alexandria to Natchez) and the south of Mississippi (as far as the line Jackson--Hattiesburg--Pascagoula) were swamped with mud. A new bay stretched inland from Vermillion Bay, two to eight miles wide and reaching in on a zig-zag line almost as far as Plaquemine like a long fjord. New Iberia seemed to have been seriously damaged but many people could be seen digging the mud away from roads and houses. Impossible to land. The most serious loss of life likely to have been on the coast. A steamer, clearly from Mexico, sunk off Point au Fer. Sea around Chandeleur Islands covered in debris. Rain easing off over the entire area. Visibility good.

The first special issue of the New Orleans paper went out at just after four in the morning; as the day went on more issues were published and the details accumulated; at eight in the morning appeared the first photographs of the affected areas with maps of the new inlets from the sea. At half past eight they printed an interview with the celebrated seismologist from Memphis University, Dr. Wilbur R. Bownell, about the cause of the earthquake in Louisiana. It's still too early to come to any firm conclusions, the famous scientist declared, but it seems that these tremors have nothing to do with the volcanic activity, which has been so active up till now, in the volcano belt of central Mexico which lies directly across from the affected area. Today's earthquake seems rather to be of tectonic origin, that's to say it was caused by the weight and pressure of mountains: on the one side there are the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Madre, and on the other side there are Appalachian Hills on the extensive lowlands of the Gulf of Mexico which continue down to the mouth of the Mississippi. The chasm that now runs up from Vermillion Bay is only small and insignificant compared with the geological collapse that has already created the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, along with the ring of islands that make up the Greater and Lesser Antilles, which were once a range of mountains. There is no doubt whatsoever that this subsidence in central America will continue with new tremors, new faults and new chasms appearing; it is even possible that the fault running up from Vermilion Bay is no more than a prelude to the reactivation of the tectonic process with its center in the Gulf of Mexico; and if that is the case we might well be witnesses to an enormous geological catastrophe in which nearly a fifth of the United States might end up as seabed.

But if that really is the case there is a certain likelihood that the ocean bed in the region of the Antilles will start to rise, or it could be somewhat further east where, according to the ancient legends, we might hope to find the sunken city of Atlantis.

On the other hand, the scientist continued more reassuringly, we need not take seriously any fear of volcanic activity in the affected areas; these craters hurling mud into the air are nothing more than eruptions of natural gas which must have been under the Vermilion fault. It wouldn't be at all surprising to find gigantic caverns of gas underneath the Mississippi Delta area, and these caverns of natural gas can explode when they come into contact with the air, hurling hundreds of thousands of tons of water and mud into the air as they do so. But of course, before we can come to any definitive conclusions, Dr. W.R. Brownell repeated, we will need to obtain more data.

While Dr. Brownell's geological observations on the catastrophe went to press, the governor of the state of Louisiana received this telegram from Fort Jackson:

regret loss of human life stop tried to miss your cities but didn't expect retreat of seawater and tidal wave after explosion stop found three hundred forty six human victims along entire coast stop offer condolences stop chief salamander stop hello fred dalton here fort jackson post office three newts just left who came in office ten minutes ago sent telegram holding pistol to my head but gone now vile monsters paid and ran back in water only doctors dog chased them shouldn't let those creatures free in city no other news send love to minnie lacoste fred dalton telegrapher

The governor of the state of Louisiana pored long over this telegram. Some kind of joker, this Fred Dalton, I reckon, he finally said. Best not to give this to the papers.

Chapter 8

Chief Salamander Makes His Demands

Three days after the earthquake in Louisiana there was another geological catastrophe announced, this time in China. The coast of the province of Kiangsu, north of Nanking, about half way between the mouth of the Yangtse and the old bed of the Hwangho, was ripped apart in a powerful, thunderous earthquake; the sea gushed into this fissure and joined up with the great lakes of Pan Yoon and Hungtsu between the cities of Hwaingan and Fugyang. Apparently as a result of the earthquake, the Yangtse left its course below Nanking and flowed down towards Lake Tai and on to Hang-Cho. Loss of human life cannot, so far, even be estimated. Hundred of thousands of refugees are fleeing into the provinces to the north and south. Japanese warships have been given orders to sail to the affected area.

Although the earthquake in Kiangsu was far more extensive than the disaster in Louisiana it attracted little attention in the world press because everyone was used to catastrophes happening in China and the loss of some million lives did not seem very important; and besides, it was scientifically clear that it was only a tectonic earthquake to do with the deep sea trench near the Riukiu and Philippine archipelagoes. But three days later, seismographs in Europe registered new tremors centred somewhere near the Cape Verde Islands. More detailed reports stated that the coast of Senegambia, south of St. Louis, had been hit by a serious earthquake. A deep fissure appeared between Lampul and Mboro, allowing the sea to gush in through the Merinagh and as far as Wadi Dimar. Eyewitnesses said that a column of fire and steam had erupted from the ground with a terrible noise, hurling sand and stones for miles around; and then there was the sound of the sea as it rushed into the gulf that had been opened up. There was no significant loss of life.

This third earthquake stirred up something akin to panic. Were all the Earths volcanoes becoming active? the papers asked. The Earths crust is starting to break up, the popular press declared. Specialists gave their opinion that the Senegambian gulley may have been no more than the result of a granite eruption by Mount Pico on the Cape Verde island of Fogo; this volcano had erupted as

recently as 1847 but since then had been considered extinct. In this case, the west African earthquake had nothing to do with seismic events in Louisiana and Kiangsu which were clearly tectonic in origin. But nobody seemed to care whether the Earth was breaking up for tectonic reasons or volcanic. The fact was that all the churches were filled to capacity that day and in some areas they had to stay open all night.

At one in the morning on the 20th. November, radio hams over most of Europe suffered serious interference to their reception, as if a new and exceptionally strong broadcaster was operating. They located the interference at two hundred and three metres; it sounded something like the noise of machinery or rushing water; then the continuous, unchanging noise was suddenly interrupted by a horrible, rasping noise (everyone described it in the same way: a hollow, nasal, almost synthetic sounding voice, made all the more so by the electronic apparatus); and this frog-like voice called excitedly, "Hello, hello, hello! Chief Salamander speaking. Hello, chief Salamander speaking. Stop all broadcasting, you men! Stop your broadcasting! Hello, Chief Salamander speaking!" And then another, strangely hollow voice asked: "Ready?" "Ready." There was a click as if the broadcast were being transferred to another speaker; and then another, unnaturally staccato voice called: "Attention! Attention! Attention!" "Hello!" "Now!"

A voice was heard in the quiet of the night; it was rasping and tired-sounding but still had the air of authority. "Hello you people! This is Louisiana. This is Kiangsu. This is Senegambia. We regret the loss of human life. We have no wish to cause you unnecessary harm. We wish only that you evacuate those areas of coast which we will notify you of in advance. If you do as we say you will avoid anything regrettable. In future we will give you at least fourteen days notice of the places where we wish to extend our sea. Incidents so far have been no more than technical experiments. Your explosives have proved their worth. Thank you for them.

"Hello you people! Remain calm. We wish you no harm. We merely need more water, more coastline, more shallows in which to live. There are too many of us. Your coastlines are already too limited for our needs. For this reason we need to demolish your continents. We will convert them into bays and islands. In this way, the length of coastline can be increased five-fold. We will construct new shallows. We cannot live in deep ocean. We will need your continents as

materials to fill in the deep waters. We wish you no harm, but there are too many of us. You will be free to migrate inland. You will not be prevented from fleeing to the hills. The hills will be the last to be demolished.

"We are here because you wanted us. You have distributed us over the entire world. Now you have us. We wish that you collaborate with us. You will provide us with steel for our picks and drills. you will provide us with explosives. You will provide us with torpedoes. You will work for us. Without you we will not be able to remove the old continents. Hello you people, Chief Salamander, in the name of all newts everywhere, offers collaboration with you. You will collaborate with us in the demolition of your world. Thank you."

The tired, rasping voice became silent, and all that was heard was the constant noise resembling machinery or the sea. "Hello, hello, you people," the grating voice began again, "we will now entertain you with music from your gramophone records. Here, for your pleasure, is the March of the Tritons from the film, Poseidon."

The press, of course, said this nocturnal broadcast was just a "crude joke", some illicit sender; but there were nonetheless millions of listeners waiting at their receivers the following night to find out whether the horrible, earnest and rasping voice would speak again. It was heard at precisely one o'clock to the accompaniment of a broad howling and hissing like the sound of the sea. "Good evening, you people," the voice quacked gaily. "To start tonight's broadcast, we would like to play you a gramophone recording of the Salamander Dance from your operetta, Galatea." Once the shameless clamour of the music had come to its end the voice once more began its vile and somehow cheerful croaking. "Hello you people! The British gunboat, Erebus, has just been torpedoed and sunk in the Atlantic Ocean after it had attempted to destroy our broadcasting equipment. The entire crew was drowned. Hello, we urge the British government to issue a statement by radio. The Amenhotep, registered in Port Said, was reluctant to deliver a cargo of explosives we had ordered to our port of Makallaha, apparently on the grounds that orders had been given to refuse any further provisions of explosives. The ship was, of course, sunk. We advise the government of the United Kingdom to revoke this order by noon tomorrow. Failure to do so will result in the sinking of the Winnipeg, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec, presently underway in the North Atlantic with cargoes of grain from Canada to Liverpool. Hello, we urge the French government to issue a

statement by radio. You are to call back the cruisers presently underway to Senegambia. Work to widen the newly created bay there is still in progress. Chief Salamander has given orders that these two governments should be reassured of his unshakeable friendship towards them. End of message. We will now, for your pleasure, play you gramophone records of Salamandria, valse Ã©rotique."

The following afternoon the Manitoba, Winnipeg, Ontario and Quebec were sunk south-west of Mizen Head. The world was overcome with a wave of horror. That evening the BBC stated that His Majesty's Government had prohibited any further supplies of food, chemical products, machinery, weapons or metals to the newts. At one o'clock that night an excited voice rasped out from the radio: "Hello, hello, hello, Chief Salamander speaking! Hello, Chief Salamander is going to speak!" And then the tired, croaking and angry voice was heard: "Hello you people! Hello you people! Do you believe we would allow you to starve us? Do not be so foolish! Whatever you do will be turned against you! In the name of all newts of the world I call on Great Britain. With immediate effect, we declare a total blockade of the British Isles with the exception of the Irish Free State. The English Channel will be closed off. The Suez Canal will be closed off. The Straits of Gibraltar will be closed to all shipping. All British ports will be closed. All British shipping in whatever part of the world will be torpedoed. Hello, calling Germany. Orders of explosives are increased ten-fold. They are to be made available immediately at the main depot on the Skagerrak. Hello, calling France. Orders of torpedoes are to be met forthwith and supplied to underwater forts C3, BFF and Quest 5. Hello you people! You have been warned. If any attempt is made to limit our supplies of foodstuffs they will be taken from your ships by force. You have been warned." The tired voice declined to a scarcely comprehensible croaking. "Hello, calling Italy. You are to prepare for the evacuation of the territories around Venice, Padova and Udine. You people have been warned, and warned for the last time. Any more nonsense from you will not be tolerated." There was a long pause while nothing was heard but the hissing of the radio like a cold, black sea. And the gay and quacking voice was heard once more: "And now we will entertain you with gramophone records of one of your latest hits, the Triton Trot."

Chapter 9

Conference in Vaduz

It was an odd sort of war, if indeed it could be called a war at all; as there was no newt state nor any acknowledged newt government which could be officially held responsible for the hostilities. The first country to find itself in a state of war with the salamanders was Great Britain. Within the first few hours the newts had sunk almost all British ships at anchor in harbour; there was nothing that they could have done about that. A number of ships on the open sea were, for the time being, comparatively safe, mainly because they were over deep ocean; in this way part of the Royal Navy was saved and was able then to break through the newt blockade of Malta and gather over the depths of the Ionian Sea; but even these units were soon sought out by the newts in their mini-submarines and sunk one by one. Within six weeks the United Kingdom had lost four fifths of its total tonnage. John Bull was given another moment in history to display his famous doggedness. His Majesty's Government refused to negotiate with the newts and did not call off its ban on giving them any supplies. "An Englishman," declared the prime minister on behalf of the entire nation, "will protect animals but will not haggle with them." Just a few weeks later there was a desperate shortage of foodstuffs in the British Isles. The last few scraps of bread and last few spoonfuls of tea or milk were reserved for the children to consume each day; the British nation bore it with exemplary dignity, despite having sunk so low that they had even eaten all their racehorses. The Prince of Wales dug the first furrow in the greens of the Royal Golf Club with his own hand so that carrots could be grown there for the orphans in London. Wimbledon tennis courts were turned over to the cultivation of potatoes, and wheat was sown over the race course at Ascot. "We can endure the greatest of sacrifices, " the leader of the Conservative Party declared in parliament, "but British honour is something we will never give up."

The blockade of British coasts was total, and so England was left with only one way of obtaining supplies and maintaining communications, and that was by air. "We need a hundred thousand aircraft," the minister for aviation declared, and all forces were applied to fulfilling this edict; but then the governments of other European powers raised bitter protests that this would disturb the balance of

power in the skies; the government of the United Kingdom would have to abandon its plans and promise never to build more than twenty thousand aircraft and even that not within the next five years. They would simply have to remain hungry or pay horrifying prices for foodstuffs supplied by the aircraft of other states; a loaf of bread cost ten shillings, a rat sausage one guinea, a box of caviar twenty-five pounds sterling. This was simply a golden age for business, industry and agriculture on the continent. All military shipping had been removed at the very start of hostilities, and so the war against the newts had to be carried out on dry land and from the air. Armies fired into the water with their cannons and machine guns but without, it seemed, doing the newts any serious harm; although the bombs dropped into the sea from aircraft seemed somewhat more successful. The newts responded by firing on British ports from their underwater cannons, reducing them to piles of rubble. They even fired on London from the Thames Estuary; then the chiefs of staff tried to attack the salamanders with harmful bacteria, petroleum and acid poured into the Thames and several other bays and estuaries. The newts responded by releasing a cloak of poisonous gas over a hundred miles of British coastline. It was no more than a demonstration, but it was enough; for the first time in history the British government was forced to call on foreign powers to intervene on its behalf, citing the ban on the use of poisonous gas in warfare.

That night, the rasping, angry and heavy voice of Chief Salamander was heard once again on the airwaves: "Hello you people! England must stop its foolishness! If you poison our water we will poison your air. We use no more than your own weapons. We are not barbarians. We have no wish to wage war with people. All we wish is to be allowed to live. We offer you peace. You will supply us with your products and sell us your land. We are willing to pay you well. We offer you more than peace. We offer you trade. We offer you gold for your land. Hello, calling the government of Great Britain. Tell me your price for the southern part of Lincolnshire around The Wash. You have three days to consider the matter. For this period I will suspend all hostilities apart from the blockades."

At that moment the rumbling of underwater cannons off the coasts of England ceased. The land cannons were also silent. There was a strange, almost eerie quiet. The British government declared in parliament that it had no intention of negotiating with animals. The residents of south Lincolnshire were warned that

there was clear danger of a major attack by the newts and that they should evacuate coastal areas and move inland; the trains, cars and buses provided, however, carried only children and some women. All the men remained where they were; it simply did not enter their heads that an Englishman might lose the land he lives on. One minute after the three-day truce had expired the shooting began; these were shots from English cannons fired by the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment to the sound of the regimental march, The Red Rose. There was then the thunder of an enormous explosion. The mouth of the River Nene was flooded up as far as Wisbech and the whole of the area around The Wash was inundated by the sea. A number of notable sites collapsed into the water, including the famous Wisbech Abbey, Holland Castle and the George and Dragon.

The following day the British government answered questions in parliament: all military measures for the protection of British coasts had been taken; the possibility of further and much more extensive attacks on British soil could not be excluded; that His Majesty's Government was nonetheless unable to negotiate with an enemy which was unwilling even to spare civilians and women. (Agreement) This was a time that would not merely determine the fate of England, but of the entire civilised world. The United Kingdom would be willing to enter into international agreements which would limit these terrible and barbaric attacks which threaten the future of mankind itself.

Some weeks later, the nations of the world met together in Vaduz.

The conference took place in Vaduz because in the height of the Alps there was no danger from the newts and because most of the world's most powerful and socially important people had already fled there from coastal areas. It was generally agreed that the conference progressed quickly to reach solutions to all the worlds' current problems. Every country (with the exceptions of Switzerland, Afghanistan, Bolivia and some other land-locked countries) agreed emphatically not to recognise the newts as an independent military power, mainly because they would then have to acknowledge their own newts as members of a salamander state; it was even possible that a salamander state of this sort would want to exercise its sovereignty over all the shores and waters occupied by newts. For this reason it was legally and practically impossible to declare war against the newts or put any other sort of international pressure on them; each state would have the right to take measures only against its own newts; it would

be a purely internal matter. This meant that it was impossible to speak of any collective diplomatic or military campaign against the newts. Any state that came under attack from the salamanders could receive international aid only in the form of overseas loans for them to help defend themselves.

At this, England put forward the proposal that every state should at least bind itself to stop supplying the newts with weapons or explosives. After full consideration the proposal was turned down, mainly because those obligations were already contained in the London Convention; secondly because it would not be possible to prevent any state from providing its newts with equipment and weaponry to defend its own shores "according to its needs"; and thirdly, seafaring nations would "understandably wish to maintain good relations with residents of the sea", so that it was deemed appropriate "not to be precipitate in taking any measure that the newts might feel to be repressive"; every state was nonetheless willing to promise to supply weaponry and explosives to any state under attack from the newts.

A suggestion put forward by the Colombian delegates in private session, that at least unofficial negotiations with the newts should take place, was accepted. Chief Salamander was to be invited to send his representatives to the conference. Great Britain protested loudly at this and refused outright to sit at the same table with the newts; but in the end the British delegation had to be content to depart, temporarily, to Engadin, for reasons of health. That night, all seafaring powers sent out an invitation to His Excellency Chief Salamander to name his representatives and send them to Vaduz. The answer was a rasping "Yes; this time we will come to meet you; next time we will expect your delegates to come into the water to meet me." The official announcement followed: "The accredited newt representatives will arrive in two days time at Buchs station by the Orient Express."

Every preparation for the arrival of the newts was made with all haste; the most luxurious bathrooms in the city were prepared for them and a special train was chartered to bring cisterns of sea water for the newt delegates to bathe in. The reception for them that evening at the railway station in Vaduz had been meant to be unofficial, but it was still attended by many of the delegates' secretaries, representatives of government offices and around two hundred journalists, photographers and film makers. At exactly twenty-five minutes past six the Orient Express arrived at the station and came to a halt beside the red carpet.

From the saloon car emerged three tall and elegant gentlemen with a number of sophisticated-looking secretaries carrying heavy briefcases. "Where are the newts, then?" somebody muttered. Two or three officials went forward uncertainly to meet the three gentlemen; but the first of the gentlemen had already begun, quickly and quietly, to say, "We are the newt delegation. I'm Professor van Dott from The Hague. Maître Rosso Castelli, avocat de Paris. Doctor Manoel Carvalho, advogado of Lisbon." The officials bowed and introduced themselves.

"So you are not newts, then," the French secretary said with a sigh.

"Of course we are not newts," said Dr. Castelli. We are their lawyers. Excuse me, but I think these gentlemen might want to take some photographs." And then the photographers and newsreel makers took a great many pictures of the smiling newt delegation. The secretaries of the legates already present also showed their pleasure. It was, after all, only reasonable and proper that the newts should send human beings to represent them. Human beings were easier to deal with. And most of all, it would avoid certain social unpleasantnesses. The first discussions with the newts' delegates took place that same night, addressing the question of how to renew peace with the United Kingdom as soon as possible. Professor van Dott asserted that there was no question that the newts had come under attack from Great Britain; the British gunboat, Erebus, had fired on the newts radio ship on the open sea; the British admiralty had broken peaceful trading with the newts by preventing the Amenhotep from unloading the cargo of explosives they had ordered; thirdly, the British government had instigated a blockade against the newts by its ban on their receiving any supplies of any sort. The newts were unable to make a complaint about these hostile acts either at The Hague, because the London Convention denied them the right to make any complaint, or in Geneva, because the newts were not a member of the United Nations; they were therefore left with no alternative but to defend themselves. Chief Salamander was nonetheless willing to end hostilities under, of course, the following conditions: 1. The United Kingdom was to apologise for the offences cited above; 2. All restrictions on supplies to the newts were to be lifted; 3. As compensation, the newts were to be ceded the lowland areas of the Punjab where they would create new bays and shorelines. The chairman of the conference stated that he would pass these conditions on to his honourable friend, the representative of the United Kingdom, who was currently unable to attend;

however he made no secret of his fear that Britain would find these conditions difficult to accept; but we could all hope that they might be the starting point for further negotiations.

Next on the agenda was the complaint by France about the newts having caused explosions on the coast of Sengambia, thus interfering in a French colonial dependency. This was answered by the famous Parisian lawyer, Dr. Julien Rosso Castelli. "Prove it!" he said. Seismographs around the world indicate that the earthquake in Senegambia was of volcanic origin and was connected with volcanic activity in Mount Pico on the island of Fogo. "Here in this dossier," he declared as he slapped his hand against it, "are all the scientific proofs you need. If, on the other hand, you have any proof that the earthquake in Senegambia was caused by any activity of my clients, then we await them with interest."

BELGIAN DELEGATE, CREUX: Your Chief Salamander declared himself that it was done by the newts"

PROFESSOR VAN DOTT: His speech was not official.

M. ROSSO CASTELLI: We are authorised by our clients to deny the contents of that speech. I request that expert witnesses be heard on whether the technology is available to create a fissure in the Earth's crust sixty-seven kilometres long. I suggest they should try the experiment of creating such a fissure. Unless, gentlemen, you have proof of the opposite, then we will be forced to talk of volcanic activity. Nevertheless, the bay created in Senegambia would be suitable for settlement by a population of newts and Chief Salamander is willing to purchase it from the government of France. We are authorised by our clients to negotiate a price.

FRENCH DELEGATE, MINISTER DEVAL: If this is understood to be an offer of compensation for the damage caused, then we are willing to discuss the matter.

M. ROSSO CASTELLI: Very well. Although the newt government does request that the contract of purchase cover also the territory of the Landes, extending from the mouth of the Gironde as far as Bayonne, an area covering six thousand seven hundred square kilometres. In other words, the newt government is willing to buy this piece of land in southern France.

MINISTER DEVAL (native of Bayonne, member of parliament for Bayonne):
So that these salamanders of yours turn part of France into seabed? Never!
Never!

DR. ROSSO CASTELLI: France will come to regret these words of yours,
monsieur. Today we have still been talking of purchase.

At this, the session was brought to an end.

The subject of the next meeting was a substantial international offer made to the newts: to cause damage to established and densely populated was unacceptable, but they would be able to build new shores and islands for themselves; in which case they could be assured of substantial loans to cover the costs; the new lands and island would then be recognised as their independent and sovereign territory.

DR. MANOEL CARVALHO, renowned lawyer from Lisbon, offered his thanks for this proposal which he would convey to the newts; but any child could understand, he said, that building new land would take much longer and cost far more than demolishing old land. Our clients are in need of new bays and shorelines as soon as possible; it is for them a matter of life and death. It would be better for mankind to accept Chief Salamander's generous offer of buying the world from the human beings instead of taking it by force. Our clients have found a way of extracting the gold contained in seawater; so that they have almost unlimited means; they would be able to pay for your world very well, very well indeed. You would do well to bear in mind that, from their point of view, the price of the world will become lower with time, especially if--as might well be expected--any further volcanic or tectonic disasters take place which might well be far larger than anything we have been witness to so far, and these might well substantially reduce the size of the continents. Today you still have the opportunity to sell the world while it is still its present size; when there is nothing left above water but the ruins of a few mountains no-one will want to pay you a penny for it. I am here as representative and legal advisor for the newts, and it is my duty to defend their interests; but I am also a human being just like yourselves, gentlemen, and the well-being of mankind is just as close to my heart as it is to yours. This is why I advise you, indeed I implore you: Sell the continents before it is too late! You can sell them as a whole or sell them country by country. Everyone now is aware of Chief Salamander's generosity and modernity; he gives his assurance that in the course of these unavoidable

changes to be made to the surface of the Earth everything possible will be done to protect human life; the continents will be flooded in stages and in a way that will avoid any panic or unnecessary catastrophe. We have been authorised to negotiate either with the this illustrious world conference as a whole or with individual states. The presence of such outstanding lawyers such as Professor van Dott and Maître Julien Rosso Castelli is your assurance that we are concerned not only to defend the legitimate interests of our clients but will also co-operate closely with yourselves to protect those things that are dearest to us all; human culture and the good of all mankind.

The atmosphere of the conference had become somewhat tense when another proposal was put forward: that the salamander should be allowed to flood and occupy central China; in return for which the newts would bind themselves in perpetuity to stay away from the shores of Europe and its population.

DR. ROSSO CASTELLI: In perpetuity, that is rather a long time. Let us say for a period of twenty years.

PROFESSOR VAN DOTT: Central China is not a very large area. Let us say the provinces of Nganhuei, Honan, Kiangsu, Chi-li and Fung-tien.

The Japanese representative protested at the ceding of Fung-tien which lay in the Japanese sphere of interest. The Chinese delegate said something, but nobody, unfortunately, was able to understand him. There was an air of growing anxiety in the negotiating chamber; it was already one o'clock in the morning.

Just then the secretary to the Italian delegation came into the room and whispered something into the ear of the Italian representative, Count Tosti. The count turned pale, stood up, and although the Chinese delegate, Dr. Ti, was still speaking, he called out hoarsely: "Mister Chairman, may I say something. Reports have just come through that the newts have flooded part of the region of Venice near Portogruaro."

There was a chill silence, broken only by the Chinese delegate who was still speaking.

"Chief Salamander did warn you of this long ago," grumbled Dr. Carvalho.

Professor van Dott turned impatiently and raised his hand. "Mister Chairman, may we return to the subject at hand. We were discussing the province of Fung-tien. We have been authorised to offer the Japanese government compensation for it in the form of gold. The question following on from that is what our clients would receive from the states concerned for the task of evacuating China."

At that moment, radio hams were listening to the newts broadcast. "You have just been listening to the barcarolle from The Tales of Hoffmann on gramophone records," the announcer rasped. "Hello, hello, we are now transferring you to Venice."

And then, all that could be heard was a black and fathomless soughing, like the sound of rising water.

Chapter 10

Mr. Povondra Blames Himself

Who would have thought so much time had flowed by? Our Mr. Povondra isn't even the doorman any more at G.H. Bondy's house; now, you might say, he is a venerable old man who can enjoy the fruits of his old and industrious life in peace as a pensioner; although his pension doesn't go very far these times of high wartime prices! He still goes out now and then to do some fishing; sitting in his boat with his fishing rod and watching how the water flows by day after day and all the things that go by with it! Sometimes he hooks a dace, sometimes a bass; there seem to be more of them nowadays, maybe because all the rivers are so much shorter. Mind you, there's nothing wrong with a nice bass; It's a bit boney sometimes, but the flesh is nice, tastes a bit like almonds. And mother knows just how to cook it. What Mr. Povondra doesn't know, though, is that mother usually uses those newspaper cuttings that he used to collect and arrange for the fire to cook the bass. He didn't keep up his collection, though, not when he started taking his pension; he got himself a fish tank instead where he keeps some goldfish; and he keeps some little newts in there too; sits there for hours, he does, watching them as they lay in the water without moving, or climbing out onto the little bank he made them with some gravel; then he'll turn round and say: "Who'd have thought it, mother?" But you've got to do more than just sit there and watch, that's why Mr. Povondra took up keeping fish. Keep yourself busy, you've always got to keep yourself busy, thought Mother Povondra contentedly. Better than if he went out drinking or got involved in politics.

A lot of water, truly a lot of water had flowed under the bridges on the Vltava. Even little Frank isn't at school learning about geography any more, he's not even a young man tearing his socks as he rushes after the silly things young men rush after. He's getting older himself, young Frank; he's got himself a good job at the post office, he has, so it's turned out quite useful that he did learn all that geography. He's starting to get a bit of sense too, thought Mr. Povondra as he guided his boat out onto the water by one of the bridges. He'll be coming round, today; it's Sunday and he won't be working. I'll take him out in the boat and we can go upstream up to the tip of St. ATMleck's ½ Island; the fish bite better up there; and Frank can tell me all about what's in the papers. Then we can go back

home to his wife and the two nippers-- it wasn't long since Mr. Povondra had relaxed into the quiet joy of being a grandfather. Mind you, it was already a year now since little Marie had started school, she likes school; and there was little Frank, his grandson, nearly weighs five stone already, he does. Mr. Povondra had a strong and deep feeling that everything was right with the world.

But there was Frank waiting on the bank waving to him, and Mr. Povondra rowed over. "Glad you've come, mind you it's no more than you should do," he added. "Mind you don't fall in the water now."

"Are they biting?" his son asked.

"Not really," the old man grumbled. "Lets go upstream a bit, shall we?"

It was a pleasant Sunday afternoon; still not time when those madmen and layabouts all come out from their football matches or whatever else they do. Prague was empty and quiet; the few people who wandered along the sides of the river and over the bridges weren't in any hurry as they ambled along decently and with dignity. They were decent reasonable people, not like those crowds who gather and laugh at the fishermen on the Vltava. Once again, Father Povondra had that nice deep feeling that all was well with the world.

"What's in the papers then, Son?" he asked with the curtness of a father.

"Nothing much, Dad," his son answered. "I saw that those newts have got up as far as Dresden, though."

"Germanys had it then," Mr. Povondra asserted. "They're funny people you know, those Germans. They're well educated, but they're funny. I knew a German once, chauffeur he was for some factory; and he wasn't half coarse, this German. Mind you, he kept the car in good condition, I'll say that for him. And now look, Germanys disappearing from the map of the world," Mr. Povondra ruminated. "And all that fuss they used to make! Terrible, it was: everything for the army and everything for the soldiers. But not even they were any match for these newts. And I know about these newts, you know that, don't you. Remember when I took you out to show you one of them when you were only so high?"

"Watch out, Dad," said his son, "you've got a bite."

"That's only a tiddler," the old man grumbled as he twitched on his rod. Even Germany now, he thought to himself. No-one even bats an eyelid at it these days. What a song and dance they used to make at first whenever these newts flooded anywhere! Even if it was only Mesopotamia or China, the papers were full of it. Not like that now, Mr. Povondra contemplated sadly, staring out at his rod. You get used to anything, I suppose. At least they're not here, though; but I wish the prices weren't so high! Think what they charge for coffee these days! I suppose that's what you have to expect if they go and flood Brazil. If part of the world disappears underwater it has its effect in the shops.

The float on Mr. Povondra's line danced about on the ripples of the water. How much of the world is it they've flooded so far then?, the old man considered. There's Egypt and India and China--they've even gone into Russia; and that was a big country, that was, Russia! When you think, all the way up from the Black Sea as far the Arctic Circle--all water! You can't say they haven't taken a lot of our land from us! And their only going slowly...

"Up as far as Dresden then, you say?" the old man spoke up.

"Ten miles short of Dresden. That means almost the whole of Saxony will soon be under water."

"I went there once with Mr. Bondy," Father Povondra told him. "Ever so rich, they were there, Frank. The food wasn't much good though. Nice people, though. Much better than the Prussians. No comparison."

"Prussia's gone now as well, though."

"I'm not surprised," the old man said regretfully. "I don't like those Prussians. It's good for the French, though, if Germanys in trouble. Give them a chance for some peace, now."

"I don't think so, Dad," Frank objected. "They were saying in the papers not long ago how a good third of France is under water now." Mr. Povondra sighed deeply.

"There was a Frenchman working for us at Mr. Bondy's, a servant, Jean his name

was. And he was a one for the ladies, ruddy disgrace it was. See, it always comes back to you if you're not responsible, like that."

"But they say the newts are within ten miles of Paris," his son, Frank, told him. "They had tunnels everywhere and then blew the whole place up. They slaughtered two army divisions, they say."

"They make good soldiers, the French," said Mr. Povondra with the air of an expert. "That Jean never used to put up with anything either. I don't what made him like that. Smelt just like a perfume shop, but if he got into a fight he really would fight. But two divisions in the newts' army--that's not much really. When you think about it," the old man considered, "people were better off when they were fighting with other people. And it didn't take them all this time either. It's twenty years it's been going on with the newts, now, and still nothing's happened, they're still making preparations for getting the best positions. But when I think of when I was a young man, now those were battles! Three million people there were on one side and three million on the other," and the old man gesticulated and made the boat rock, "and then it was a Hell of a battle when they got together--but they can't even get themselves a proper war these days. They've always got the same concrete embankments up and never even come together with bayonets. Not a bit of it!"

"But newts and people can't go into battle like that, Dad," said Povondra junior in defence of the modern style of warfare. "You just can't make a bayonet charge underwater."

"You're quite right," grumbled Mr. Povondra with contempt. "They just can't get together properly. But put an army of people against an army of people, and then you'll see what they can do. And what do you know about war, anyway?"

"I just hope they don't come here," said Frank, rather unexpectedly. "When you've got kids, you know..."

"What do you mean, come here," asked the startled Mr. Povondra senior. "What, here, all the way to Prague, you mean?"

"Not just Prague, anywhere in the country," the worried Povondra junior replied. "If the newts have already got as far as Dresden then I think..."

"You think too much, you do," Mr. Povondra reprimanded him. "How would they get here? What, across all these mountains surrounding the country?"

"They could come up the Elbe and from there up into the Vltava."

At this idea, Father Povondra snorted in disgust. "Don't talk rubbish! Up the Elbe? They might get some of the way up but not all the way. It's all rocks and mountains in the way. I've been there, I've seen them. Not a bit of it, the newts won't get here, well be alright. And Switzerland too, they'll be alright too. It's cause we haven't got any coastline, see, big advantage that is. It's if your country borders on the sea, that's when your in trouble."

"But there's sea now as close as Dresden..."

"That's Germany, that is," the old man retorted. "That's their business. But the newts can't get as far as us, it stands to reason. They'd have to get all the mountains out the way first; and I don't think you've got much idea how much work that'd be!"

"Well that's nothing for them," young Mr. Povondra objected gloomily. "They do that sort of thing all the time! Think of Guatemala; they flooded a whole range of mountains there."

"Down there it's different," said the old man confidently. "Don't talk such rubbish, Frank! That was down in Guatemala, not here in Europe. Things are different here." Young Mr. Povondra sighed.

"As you say, Dad. But when you think that those horrors have already flooded about a fifth of all the land..."

"Only where it's next to the sea, you daft ha'p'orth, not anywhere else. You just don't understand about politics. It's those countries that are next to the sea, they're the ones that have been at war with the newts, not us. Were neutral, we are, and that's why they can't do anything against us. That's just how it is. And now keep quiet for a bit, else we won't catch anything."

Over the water was peace and quiet. The trees on StÅ™eleckÃ½ Island already cast long and delicate shadows on the surface of the Vltava. Trams jangled over the bridge, nannies pushing prams ambled along the banks, the people out on

this Sunday afternoon were gay and friendly...

"Dad?" exclaimed young Povondra, almost like a child.

"What is it?"

"Is that a catfish there?"

"Where?" Out of the river, just by the National Theatre, there protruded a large black head moving slowly upstream.

"Is that a catfish," Povondra junior said again. The old man put down his fishing rod.

"That there?" he exclaimed, pointing at it with a shaking finger. "That?" The black head disappeared under the water. "That wasn't a catfish, Frank," explained the old man in a voice that hardly seemed his own. "We might as well go home, now. We've all had it."

"Had what?"

"A newt. That was a newt, they're here. Lets go home," he repeated as he fumbled to put his rod away. "We've all had it."

"You're shaking," said Frank anxiously. "What's wrong?"

"Lets just go home," the old man stuttered crossly as his chin quivered. "I'm cold. I'm cold. That's all we needed! We've had it. They're here now. Oh Christ it's cold! I want to go home."

Young Mr. Povondra glanced at him quizzically and took hold of the oars. "I'll take there you, Dad," he said in a worried voice and drove the boat to the island with a few strong strokes of the oars. "Just leave it, I'll tie the boat up."

"Whys it so cold?" the old man wondered as his teeth chattered.

"I'll keep hold of you, Dad. Just come with me," he urged as he took him by the arm. "I think you must have caught a cold on the water. It was just a piece of wood, that's all." The old man was shaking like a leaf.

"Piece of wood? Don't give me that! I know what I saw! It was a newt! Let go of me!" Mr. Povondra junior did something he had never done in his life before; he hailed a taxi and pushed his father in as he told the driver where to go.

"I'll take you, Dad, it's getting late."

"It's already too late," his father raved. "It's much too late. We've all had it, Frank. That wasn't a piece of wood. That was them!" When they got home, young Mr. Povondra almost had to carry his father up the stairs.

"Get the bed ready, Mum," he whispered quickly at the door. "We've got to put Dad to bed, he's been taken ill all of a sudden."

So there was Father Povondra lying under the bedclothes; his nose peeking strangely out from his face and his lips murmuring and mumbling something that could not be understood; how old he looked, how old! Then he became a little calmer...

"Are you feeling better now, Dad?" At the foot of the bed was Mother Povondra, her hand to her mouth and weeping into her apron; their daughter in law was tending the stove and the children, Frank and Marie, gazed wide-eyed at their grandfather as if they hardly knew him. "Are you sure you don't want a doctor, Dad?" Father Povondra looked at the children and whispered something; then his eyes suddenly filled with tears. "Is there anything you need, Dad?"

"Yes, yes there is something," the old man whispered. "Something you ought to know. It's all my fault. If only I'd never let that sea captain in to see Mr. Bondy, if I'd never let him in, all this would never have happened..."

"It's alright, nothing's happened, Dad," young Povondra tried to soothe him.

"You don't understand these things," the old man gasped. "We've all had it, don't you see that? It's the end of the world. It's going to be all sea even here, even here now that the newts are here. And it's all my fault; I should never have let that sea captain in to see Mr. Bondy. Everyone ought to know, they ought to know whose fault it all is."

"Nonsense," his son replied sharply. "You shouldn't be thinking like this, Dad. It's everyone's fault. It's governments' fault, it's big business's fault. Everyone

wanted to have all the newts they could get. We all wanted to get as much out of the newts as we could. That's why we sent them all those weapons and all that-- it's all our faults."

Mr. Povondra looked up crossly. "It always used to be nothing but sea, and that's how it's going to be again. It's the end of the world. Somebody told me once that even Prague was seabed once. I think it must have been the newts that did it then as well. I should never have let that sea captain in to see Mr. Bondy. There was something that kept telling me, don't do it, and then I thought to myself, perhaps I'll get a tip from this sea captain. And then, he never did. That's how you destroy the whole world you see, all for nothing..." The old man gulped back something like a tear. "I know, I know full well, we've all had it. It's the end of the world, and it's all my fault..."

"Grandfather, wouldn't you like to have some tea?" asked the young Mrs. Povondra sympathetically.

"All I want," the old man sighed, "all I want is for these children to forgive me."

Chapter 11

The Author Talks to Himself

"Well you can't just leave it like that, can you!" the authors internal voice declared.

Well, why not? asked the author, rather unsure of himself.

"You mean you're going to let Mr. Povondra die like that?"

Well I don't want to do it like that but, well, Mr. Povondra's an old man after all, he must be well over seventy...

"And you're going to leave him to die in a state of mental torture like that? Can't you even say something like But Grandad, it's not as bad as all that, the newts won't destroy the world, mankind will save itself, just you wait and see? Surely there's something you can do for him!"

I suppose I could get a doctor for him, the author suggested. Suppose the old man has had an attack of nerves; or at that age he could have had a lung inflammation, which, thanks be to God, he survives; and he could still sit little Marie on his knee and ask what she's been learning in school. All the joys of old age, I could let the old man have all the joys of old age.

"Fine sort of joys of old age that is," the internal voice sneered. "Hell hug the child with his ancient hands and all the time hell be thinking--thinking with horror--that one day shell be fleeing from the rush of water inexorably flooding the whole world; hell wrinkle his bushy brow and whisper in a voice of dread: That's what I did, Marie, that's what I did. Listen, do you really want to have the whole of mankind destroyed?"

The author frowned. Don't ask me what I want. Do you think I wanted to see the continents where people live reduced to rubble, do you think I wanted it to end like this? That was just the logical course of events; what could I have done to stop that? I did everything I could; I gave people enough warning; what about that X, that was partly me. I warned them, don't give the newts weapons and

explosives, stop this vile trading in salamanders, and so on--and you saw how it all turned out. They all had a thousand good economic and political reasons why they couldn't stop. I'm not a politician or a businessman; how am I supposed to persuade them about these things. What are we supposed to do; quite likely the world will collapse and disappear under water; but at least that will happen for political and economic reasons we can all understand, at least it will happen with the help of science technology and public opinion, with human ingenuity of all sorts! Not some cosmic catastrophe but just the same old reasons to do with the struggle for power and money and so on. There's nothing we can do about that.

The internal voice was quiet for a while. "And don't you feel sorry for mankind?"

Hold on, not so fast! Nobody's saying the whole of mankind has to be destroyed. All the newts want is more shoreline where they can live and lay their eggs. Maybe what they'll do is turn the continents into lots of long strings so that there's as much shoreline as possible. What if there are still some people surviving on these strips of land? And there they can work metal and other things for the salamanders. As the newts can't work with fire themselves, can they.

"So mankind will be put into the service of the newts."

Yes, if that's what you want to call it. They'll simply be working in factories like they do now. They'll just have different masters, that's all. So that means it might not be so different after all...

"And don't you feel sorry for mankind?"

Oh, just leave me alone, for Gods sake! What am I supposed to do about it? It is what the people wanted, don't forget; they all wanted to have newts, they wanted commerce, industry and technology; civil authorities and military authorities, they all wanted it; even Povondra junior said so: it's all of our faults. How do you think I could not feel sorry for mankind, anyway? And most of all, I felt sorry for them when I saw how, of their own free will and whatever the cost, how they were hurtling to their own perdition. It'd be enough to make anyone scream. He'd shout and raise his hands as if he'd seen a train going down the wrong track. And now it can't be stopped. The newts are going to keep on

multiplying on and on and on and they'll go on demolishing the old continents on and on. Think what it was that Wolf Meynert said about the newts: that people would have to make way for them; and it would only be the salamanders that would create a world that was happy, unified and uniform...

"Oh come on, now! Wolf Meynert? Wolf Meynert was an intellectual. You think up something as vile and murderous and nonsensical as this and you think Wolf Meynert is going to save the world? Never mind, leave it. What do you think Marie might be doing now?"

Marie? I suppose she's out playing somewhere. Don't make a noise, they told her, Grandad's asleep. But she doesn't know what's happening and it's a very long time before...

"And what's she actually doing?"

Don't know. Maybe she's trying to touch her nose with the tip of her tongue.

"There, you see? And you'd let something like a new Great Flood come along."

Just stop it, will you. I can't work miracles. What has to happen will happen! Things run along their inevitable course. And even that's reassuring in its way: that everything that happens has its own necessity and follows certain rules.

"Couldn't the newts be stopped in some way?"

No. There are too many of them. They've got to have room to live in.

"What about if they all died out in some way? Something like some kind of epidemic or degeneration..."

No, that's too cheap and easy. Why should nature have to put right what's been done by man? See?--not even you think they could do anything to save themselves now. You basically think something will come along from somewhere else. I'll tell you something: do you know who it is that still--even now when a fifth of Europe is already underwater--is still providing the newts with explosives and torpedoes and drills? Do you know who it is that's working feverishly in all the laboratories, trying to find even more effective machines and materials for sweeping the world out of existence? Do you know who it is who's

lending the newts money, who it is who's financing the end of the world, this new Flood?

"Yes, I know. All the factories. All the banks. All the countries in the world."

Well then! If it was just newts against people it might be possible to do something; but when it's people against people then there's no way of stopping it, is there.

"Hold on, people against people! I've just thought of something. What if it was newts against newts?"

Newts against newts. How do you mean?

"Well what if for instance...if there are too many newts they might start squabbling about some tiny stretch of coast or some bay or something; then they can start fighting about bigger and bigger lengths of coast until they get into a big struggle about all the coastlines in the world, eh? Newts against newts! How's that, wouldn't that follow the natural course of events?"

Er, no, that wouldn't work. You can't have newts fighting with newts. That wouldn't be natural. The newts are just one species.

"Well people are just one species too, aren't they. And it's never stopped them fighting with each other; all the same species and think of all the excuses for war they've used! It hasn't had to be about space to live in, it's been about power, prestige, influence, fame, resources and I don't know what else! Why couldn't the newts start fighting among themselves about something like prestige?"

Why would they do that? What do you think they'd get out of it?

"Nothing, except that some of them would get more coast to live on for a short time and a bit more power than the others. And then after a while it'd be the other way round."

And why would some have more power than the others? They're all the same, after all, they're all newts; they've all got the same skeleton, they're all as ugly as each other and all as mediocre as each other. What would make them start killing each other? Just tell me what you think it is that they might start fighting

over.

"Just leave them to it and they'll soon find something. If there's one group living on the western shore and another on the eastern, they'll probably start to despise each other in the name of West against East. And, here you've got the European salamanders while down there there are the African; it'd be strange if one lot didn't want to be better than the others! So they can go and teach the others a lesson in the name of civilisation, or expansionism or I don't know what: they're bound to think of some kind of ideal or political reason which means that newts on one shore will have to go and beat up the newts on the other shore. The salamanders are as civilised as we are, don't forget; they won't be short of arguments to do with power or commercial interests or legal rights or culture of some such."

And they've got plenty of weapons. Don't forget they're fantastically well armed.

"Yep, they've got plenty of weapons. And they could learn how it is that history's made from the example given by people, couldn't they!"

Hold on a sec., hold on. (The author jumps up and starts to pace excitedly around his study.) You're right, it would be strange if they didn't do it! I can see it now. You only need to look at the map of the world--where's that map, I've got one here somewhere, where is it?

"There it is."

Right. So here's the Atlantic, there's the Mediterranean, the North Sea. Europe here, America there--so this here is the cradle of culture and modern civilisation. And somewhere there is the sunken city of Atlantis...

"And now that's where the newts are flooding Atlantis all over again."

That's it. And here is...the Pacific, the Indian Ocean. The ancient and mysterious Orient. The cradle of civilisation, as they say. And somewhere here, somewhere to the east of Africa, is the mythical island of Lemuria that was flooded. Sumatra, and a bit to the east of Sumatra...

"The little island of Tana Masa. The cradle of the newts."

Exactly. And that's where King Salamander, the spiritual leader of all the newts, has his court. Captain van Toch's tapa-boys still live there, the original newts in the Pacific, and still half wild. So this is their Orient. The whole area is called Lemuria now, while the other area, the civilised, Europeanised or Americanised area where they use all the modern technology, that's Atlantis. So Chief Salamander rules there as a dictator, the great conqueror, soldier and inventor, the Genghis Khan of the newts and destroyer of dry land. Now he will be a magnificent figure.

("...but, do you think he's really a newt?")

(...No. Chief Salamander is human. His real name is Andreas Schultze, and he took part in the Great War as an NCO somewhere)

("So that's it!")

(Yes, that's it, now you've got it.) So there's Atlantis here, Lemuria there. They form two different groups because of geography, administration, cultural differences...

"...and national differences. Don't forget about national differences. The Lemurian salamanders speak Pidgin English, whereas the Atlantic ones speak Basic English."

Yes, alright. As time goes by, the Atlantic newts go through the old Suez Canal into the Indian Ocean...

"Naturally, the classic way to the East."

Right. And at the same time, the Lemurian newts press on around the Cape of Good Hope to the western coast of what had been Africa, asserting that the whole of Africa is part of Lemuria.

"Naturally."

They use slogans such as, Lemuria for Lemurians, Out with the Foreigners, and so on. A gulf of mistrust develops between Atlanta and Lemuria and old enmities are revived. Their hatred becomes a matter of life and death.

"Or else they develop into different nations."

Yes. The Atlantians despise the Lemurians and call them filthy savages; the Lemurians have a fanatical hatred for the Atlantian newts and see them as imperialists, western devils, and corruptors of the ancient purity of newtdom. Chief Salamander forces the Lemurians to grant concessions on their shores, supposedly in the interests of trade and civilisation. King Salamander, the noble patriarch of the Lemurians, has to grant these concessions against his will because they have less weapons. Things flare up in the mouth of the Tigris, not far from where Baghdad used to be: the native Lemurians attack the Atlantian colonists, killing two of their officers, supposedly because of some insult to their nation. And as a result of that ...

".. it leads to war. Naturally."

Yes, there's a world war of newts against newts.

"In the name of culture and decency."

And in the name of True Newtdom. In the name of Glory and Greatness. Their slogan is, It's us or them! The Lemurians, armed with Malay kukries and daggers cut down the Atlantian intruders without mercy; but the Atlantian newts have been educated by Europeans and are more advanced and release poisonous chemicals and specially cultured bacteria into the Lemurian Sea and these weapons are so effective they poison all the oceans of the world. The sea is infected with artificially cultivated plague. And that's it. All the newts die.

"All of them?"

All of them. Down to the very last one. They'll become an extinct species. All that'll be left of them will be the old fossil of *Andrias Scheuchzeri* in Ä–hningen.

"And what about the people?"

The people? Oh, yes, the people. Well, bit by bit they start to come back down from the hills back down to the coasts of what's left of the continents; but the ocean will still be full of the stench of decomposing newts. The continents slowly grow back because of the silt deposited by rivers; the sea is pushed back bit by bit, and everything will be almost the same as it was before. There's a new

legend about a Great Flood sent by God to punish man for his sins. And there will be new legends about lands that disappeared under the water, and these lands will have been the cradle of human civilisation; and there will myths and legends about places like England and France and Germany...

"And then?"

...and then, I don't really know.

Footnotes

[1. Cf. G. Kreuzmann, Geschichte der Molche . Hans Tietze, Der Molch des XX Jahrhunderts. Kurt Wolff, Der Molch and das deutsche Volk. Sir Herbert Owen, Salamanders and the British Empire. Giovanni Focaja, L'evoluzione degli anfibi durante il Fascismo . Léon Bonnet, Les Urodèles et la Société des Nations . S Madariaga, Las Salamandras y la Civilización and others.]

[2. Cf. *The War with the Newts*, book I, chapter 12.]

[3. This can be seen straight away from the first cutting in Mr. Povondra's collection:

NEWT MARKET

(Czechoslovak Press Agency) Reports issued by the Salamander Syndicate for the end of the quarter show a thirty percent rise in newt trading. Nearly seventy million newts were supplied over this period, especially to south and central America, Indochina and Italian Somalia. Plans are in progress for deepening and widening the Panama Canal, dredging Guayaquil harbour and the deepening of shallow waters in the Torres Straits, which, according to the latest estimates will involve moving nine thousand million cubic metres of firm land. Construction of islands for major airports between Madeira and Bermuda is not due to start until next spring. Creation of the Marian Islands, under Japanese authority, is still in progress; eight hundred and forty acres of new land—light land as it is called—has been created so far between the islands of Tinian and Saipan. Newt prices are very strong, due the increasing demand, at Leading 61 and Team 620. Supplies are adequate.]

[4. Difficulties of this sort are illustrated in this undated cutting:]

[5. Almost the only pistol used for this purpose was the one invented by Inž. Mirko Šafránek and manufactured in the city of Brno.]

[6. Cf. the following newspaper report"

(Havas) The Australian trade union leader, Harry MacNamara, declared a general strike for all workers in the shipping, transport, electronics and related trades because of the belief by members of these trades that the import of working newts into Australia should come under strict control in accordance with immigration laws. In contrast, Australian farmers have been agitating to have restrictions on the import of newts eased because demand for domestically grown maize and animal fats, especially sheep fat, has substantially increased in order to feed them. The government wants to have a compromise; the Newt Syndicate offers to make a payment of six shillings to the trades unions for each newt imported and the government is willing to guarantee that the newts will be employed only in the water, which, for reasons of public decency, they will remain immersed in up to the chest. The trade unions, though, insist the newts show no more than their heads and ask for a payment of ten shillings per newt in accordance with registration taxes. It seems most likely that an agreement will be reached that involves contributions from the public purse.]

[7. Cf. a remarkable document from Mr. Povondra's collection:

36 DROWNING PEOPLE SAVED BY NEWTS

(From our own correspondent)

Madras, 3rd April

The steamer, Indian Star, collided with a boat carrying around 40 natives in Madras harbour, putting them all in danger of drowning. Before a police boat could be sent out, a number of newts working on the removal of mud from the dock area rushed to their assistance and carried thirty-six drowning people back to dry land. One of the salamanders was seen personally to pull three women and two children from the water. As a reward for their noble actions the local authorities wrote them a letter of thanks which was presented to them in a waterproof case. On the other hand, many of the local residents were appalled at the newts having been allowed to touch drowning people who belonged to a higher caste. This was because the newts are regarded as unclean and therefore as untouchable. Several thousand natives gathered at the dockside insisting that the newts be removed from the harbour area. Police however succeeded in maintaining order; there were three deaths and one hundred and twenty arrests.

Peace was restored by ten o'clock in the evening and the salamanders have returned to work.]

[8. Cf. the following, highly interesting, cutting which, unfortunately, is in an unknown language and cannot therefore be translated:

SAHT NA KCHRI TE SALAAM ANDER BWTAT

Saghtgwan tlap ne Salaam Ander bwtati og theni berchi ne Simbwana mbengwe ogandi sukh na moimol opwana Salaam Ander sri moana gwens. Og di limbw, og di bwtat na Salaam Ander kchri pche ogandi pwe ogwandi te ur maswali sukh? Na, ne ur lingo tIslamli kcher oganda Salaam Andrias sahti. Bend optonga kchri Simbwana mÃ©dh, salaam!]

[9. Cf. the following extensive and objective description, signed as e.w., 5th October:

S-TRADE

"Singapore, 4th October. Leading 63. Heavy 317. Team 648. Odd Jobs 26.35. Trash 0.08. Spawn 80—132."

Readers can find reports of this sort every day in the financial sections of the papers between reports on the price of cotton, tin or wheat.

But do you know what is meant by these mysterious words and figures? Yes, they refer to the trade in salamanders, or S-Trade; but most readers idea of what these figures actually mean is less precise. Perhaps they imagine a big market place swarming with thousands and thousands of newts, where buyers come in their sun helmets and turbans, inspect the goods on offer and finally point to a healthy, well developed, young newt saying, "I'd like to buy this piece, what is its cost?"

In reality, the newt market looks somewhat different. In the marble-clad S-Trade building in Singapore you will not see a single newt, only lively and elegant officials in white suits taking telephone orders.

"Yes sir. Leading cost 63. How many? Two hundred? That will be alright. Twenty Heavy and a hundred and eighty Team. Okay, that's quite clear. The ship sets sail in five weeks time. Right? Thank you, sir." The whole of the S-Trade palace is abuzz with telephone calls; it seems more like an office or a bank than a market; but this white and grand-looking building with the Ionian columns at the front is a market place more famous than the Harun ar Rashid bazaar in Baghdad.

But let us return to the market report mentioned above with all its commercial jargon. Leading means simply the specially selected, most intelligent newts, usually about three years old and carefully trained to become supervisors and managers in the newts work colonies. They are sold individually and without regard to their body weight; they are valued solely for their intelligence. Singapore Leading, all of whom speak good English, are considered best of all and the most reliable; there are also various other kinds of newts given positions of responsibility, such as the Capitanos, Engineers, Malayan Chiefs, Foremanders and so on, but it is the Leading Newts that are thought the most valuable. Their present value is about sixty dollars.

The Heavies are muscular newts, usually about two years old and weighing between a hundred and a hundred and twenty pounds. They are sold only in squads known as bodies, consisting of six individuals each. They have been trained to perform the heaviest physical work such as rock breaking, removing boulders and so on. If a report states that Heavies are at 317, that means that the cost if each body is \$317. Each squad of Heavies is usually assigned to one Leading which will act as supervisor.

Team are the ordinary working newts, weighing between 80 and 100 pounds each; they are sold only in working groups (teams) of twenty; they are intended for use together on major tasks and are often used for dredging, construction of dykes and dams and so on. Each team of twenty will have a Leading to supervise it.

The Odd Jobs constitute a class of their own. These are newts that, for one reason or another, were never trained for collective or specialised work. This could be because they grew up outside the large specialist newt farms run by specialists. They are, in fact, half wild, but can often be very talented. They can be bought individually or by the dozen and can be used for various kinds of supplementary or minor jobs for which a whole squad of newts would not be needed. If the Leadings can be seen as the élite of the newt world, the Odd Jobs can be seen as something like the proletariat. Recently, they have commonly been bought as the raw material for newts which can be trained further into Leading, Heavy, Team or Trash.

The Trash are the less valuable newts which are weak or physically defective. They are not sold as individuals or in squads but in bulk by weight, typically several dozen tons at a time; the price of a kilogram of live weight is currently between seven and ten cents. It is not actually known what they are used for or why they are bought— maybe they are put to some kind of light work in water; to avoid misunderstanding, you should remember that newts are not edible for man. They are bought almost exclusively by Chinese middle-men; where they take them has never been ascertained.

Spawn consists of tadpoles up the age of twelve months. They are bought and sold by hundreds and enjoy a lively trade, mainly because they are cheap to buy and cheap to transport; they grow into adult newts, capable of work, at the place where they are to be employed. The Spawn are transported in barrels, as although adult newts need to leave the water every day the tadpoles never do. It is not unusual for individuals of exceptional talent to emerge from among the Spawn, even more capable than the typical Leading; this adds a peculiar interest to dealing in tadpoles. These highly talented newts can then be sold for several hundred dollars each; the American millionaire, Denicker, paid as much as two thousand dollars for a newt that spoke nine languages fluently and had it transported on a special ship all the way to Miami; the transport alone cost nearly twenty thousand dollars. It has

recently become popular to buy tadpoles for the newt stables, where fast sporting newts are selected and trained; they are then harnessed in groups of three onto flat boats in the form of a shell. These shell races of boats pulled by newts are now the height of fashion and the favourite pastime of young American girls in Palm Beach, Honolulu and Cuba; they are known as Triton Races or Venus Regattas. The young women competing will stand in the light shell-shaped boat and scud across the water dressed in the shortest and most alluring swimsuits, controlling the team of three newts through silken reins; the prize is merely the title, Venus. Mr. J.S Tincker, known as the tin-can king, bought a trio of racing newts for his little daughter, Poseidon, Hengist and King Edward, for at least thirty-six thousand dollars. But all this is not part of the S-Trade proper, which limits itself to the provision, round the world, of reliable, working Leadings, Heavies and Teams.

We have already mentioned the newt farms. The reader ought not to imagine fields and enormous breeding pens; the farms consist of no more than a few miles of bare coastline with a few scattered huts of corrugated iron. One hut is for the vet, one for the manager, and the others are for the supervising personnel. It is only when the tide goes out that it is possible to see the long fences running out into the sea and dividing the beach into a number of basins. One is for the tadpoles, the second for the Leading class, and so on; each class is fed and exercised separately but always at night. At sunset, the newts come out of their holes in the shore and gather around their teachers, who are ordinary old soldiers. First comes the talking lesson; the teacher will say a word such as dig out loud to the newts, and mime its meaning. Then they form into ranks of four and they are taught to march; this is followed by a half hour of physical exercises and a period of rest in the water. After the break, they are how to handle various tools and weapons and then, under the supervision of their teachers, they do practical work on underwater constructions for about three hours. After this work they go back into the water where they are fed on dried food for newts, consisting mainly of corn flour and fat; Leadings and Heavies are also given meat. Laziness and disobedience are punished by withholding food, there are no other physical punishments, mainly because salamanders have virtually no sense of pain. As soon as the Sun rises on the newt farms there is a deathly silence; the humans go to bed and the newts disappear under the sea.

There are only two times in the year when this procedure is not followed. Once in the mating season when the newts are left to their own devices for two weeks, and secondly when the tanker from the Newt Syndicate steams into the farm with orders to the farmer about how many newts of what classes are to be taken away. This takes place at night; the ships captain, the farm manager and a vet sit at a table under the lamplight while the supervisors and ships ratings close off the newts access to the sea. Then the newts come one at a time to the table to be judged whether they are suitable or not. The newts chosen are put into the dinghy and taken on board the tanker. Mostly, they are quite willing to collaborate in this affair, with little more ever needed than a sharp word of command; there are rare occasions when mild force is needed in form of handcuffs. The tadpoles, of course, are caught in nets.

Once on board the newt tankers, the salamanders are transported under conditions just as humane and hygienic; they receive highly nutritious food and the water in their tanks is changed every day. The death rate on the voyage hardly reaches ten percent. At the request of animal protection societies, every newt tanker has a chaplain on board who watches over how the crew behave towards the newts and is required to preach to them every night that they should always show respect for humans, always do as they are told and always feel love for their prospective employers, who would never show anything but fatherly concern for their well-being. Fatherly concern must certainly be a difficult concept to explain to newts, as fatherhood is something unknown to them. The better educated salamanders adopted the name Papa Newt for the ships chaplains. The newts were also shown educational films during the voyage which displayed not only the wonders of human technology but also what work and duties would be expected of the newts. These films were found to be very effective.

There are those who say that S-Trade stands for Slave Trade. Well, as disinterested observers we can say that if the former slave trade had been as well organised and hygienic and as perfectly operated as the current trade in newts, then we could only offer the slaves our congratulations. The more expensive salamanders in particular are treated very well, if only because the captain and crew of the newt tankers are depend on the lives of the newts entrusted to them for their own wages. The author of this article has seen personally how the toughest of seamen on tanker SS 14 were deeply touched when two hundred and forty top class newts in one of the tanks became ill and suffered serious diarrhoea. They went to see them almost with tears in their eyes and gave expression to their humane feelings with the rough words, "These bastards owe us too much to die on us now!"]

[10. We cite the following contemporary description:

BUCCANEERS OF THE XX CENTURY E.E.K.

It was eleven at night when the captain ordered the national flag to be taken down and put out the dinghy. It was a bright, moonlit night; I think it was Gardner Island we rowed out to, in the Phoenix Archipelago. On moonlit nights like that the newts come out onto the shore and dance; you can go up close to them and they won't hear you, they're so obsessed with this dance of theirs, all there together and saying nothing. There were twenty of us who went onshore carrying oars, we spread out all around the swarm of newts on the beach and surrounded them in the darkness, apart from the milky light of the moon.

It's hard to describe what it feels like to see those newts dancing. About three hundred of them sit on their back legs in a perfect circle, facing inwards; the middle of the circle is empty. The newts keep perfectly still as if they'd gone rigid; it looks like a circular palisade around some secret altar; only there's no altar there and no god. All of a sudden one of them starts hissing "ts-ts-ts" and swinging the upper half of its body round and round; then the next one starts doing the same and so on and on and after a few seconds all the newts are whirling the upper half of their bodies round like a frenzy, but staying on the same spot, quicker and quicker, not saying a word but getting faster and faster, like they were drunk or possessed. After about a quarter of an hour one of the newts will start to get tired, then another, then a third, they'll lose their strength as they swing round and then go stiff; then they all sit still again like statues, then after a while another one of them will start going "ts-ts-ts", another one will start swinging round and then they're all suddenly dancing again, the whole circle. I know the way I'm describing it makes it sound very mechanical, but imagine it with the moonlight making everything white and the waves on the shore make their long slow sounds; there was something made it seem infinitely magical, and something made it seem evil. I stood there, hardly breathing, I wasn't sure whether I was amazed or horrified. "Here, you'd better move your feet, mate," called the man nearest to me, "else you'll start growing roots!"

We closed in around the circle of animals as they danced. The men held their oars out in front of them and whispered, not so much because the newts might hear them as that it was night. "Into the middle, quick," called out the commanding officer. We all ran into that circle of newts as they whirled about, and you could hear the oars as they thudded down on the newts backs. It was only then that the newts were startled and cowered down into the centre or tried to slide away into the sea between the oars, but those ones got hit with an oar that threw them back into the circle and they'd scream with the pain of it, and because they were so scared. Wed use a flagpole to push them back into the middle, squeeze them into a tight group, all lying on top of each other; ten men would round them up into a pen made of oars and another ten would use their oars to hit and shove the ones that tried to climb out under them and run away. It was just one mass of black, writhing meat, panicked and screaming as the oar blows

landed on them in the darkness. Then they'd open up a gap between two of the oars; a newt would creep out of it and it'd be knocked down with a blow on the back of the head with a big stick; then there'd be another one and a third one until there were about twenty of them lying there. "Close it," the officer ordered, and the gap between the two oars would shut. Bully Beach and Dingo, the half-cast, they'd take one of the stunned newts in each hand and drag them along the beach to the dinghy, just like sacks, not like living beings. If the newt that was being dragged along got caught between some stones the seaman dragging him would just pull harder and give a vicious tug so that a leg might be pulled off. "Don't you worry about that," grumbled old Mike who was standing next to me. "It'll grow back again." Once all the stunned newts had been thrown into the dinghy, the officer would just say, "Get the next lot ready." And then it would start all over again, with the newts being clubbed on the back of the head. This officer, Bellamy, his name was, he was a quiet and educated man, an excellent chess player; but this was a hunt, or rather a business just like any other. There were more than two hundred newts knocked out like this; about seventy of them were left because they were probably dead and not worth the effort of dragging away.

Back on board, the captured newts were thrown into a tank. Our ship was an old oil tanker and the tanks stank of oil because they hadn't been cleaned out properly, and the water had an obvious oily film over it. All that had been done was that the cover had been taken off so that the air could get to it. When the newts were thrown in it looked thick and repulsive, like some kind of noodle soup. In some places where they moved about they looked weak and pitiful. Over the next day they were left alone while they came to, then the day after, four men would come along and jab long poles into the soup, as everyone called it, they'd mix all the bodies together and watch to see if there were any that weren't moving or where the flesh was falling off; they'd hook them on long poles and pull them out of the tank. Then the captain would ask Is the soup clean?—Yes sir.—Pour the water in—yes sir. That soup had to be cleaned like this every day, and each time they'd throw six to ten pieces of damaged goods, as they called them, into the sea; there was always a lot of big and well fed sharks closely following our ship. The stink from the tanks was awful; despite being changed now and then the water in them was yellow, full of excrement and bits of wet food; there'd be these black bodies lying about in it, splashing wearily or just doing nothing, hardly able to breathe. Well they've got it good, old Mike insisted. I saw a ship once used to transport them in metal benzine barrels; they all died.

Six days later we picked up new goods off the island of Nanomea.

This then, is how the trade in newts is operated; an illegal business, modern piracy to be more exact, which burgeoned overnight, as it were. It is said that nearly a quarter of all the newts bought and sold have been hunted and captured in this way. Newts multiplied in the hatcheries which the Newt Syndicate no longer wished to maintain as farms and overran some of the smaller islands in the Pacific so much that they became a serious pest; the local people disliked them and insisted they put entire islands in danger of collapse because of the tunnels and passageways; so the colonial authorities and the Newt Syndicate itself turned a blind eye to the pirate raids where the newts lived. It was reckoned that there were as many as four hundred pirate ships occupied solely with hunting newts. As well as the small traders there were entire shipping companies acting as latter day buccaneers in this way, and the biggest of them was the Pacific Trade Company, based in Dublin with Charles B. Harriman as its managing director. A year earlier it had been even worse, with Teng, a bandit from China, would use his three ships to directly attack the farms of the syndicate itself and had no hesitation in killing the staff if they tried to stand in their way. The previous November, Teng and the whole of his fleet had been sunk by the American gunboat, Minnetonka, off Midway Island. Since then, the trade in newts had kept to less wild forms of piracy and enjoyed steady growth after certain procedures had been

agreed on such as the ship's national flag being hoisted when it attacks the shore of a foreign land, that no other goods would be traded in under the pretext of piracy, that the newts acquired would not be disposed of at dumping prices but would be designated inferior quality when put on the market. Newts in the illegal trade would be sold at between twenty and twenty-two dollars each; they are seen as inferior quality but very robust considering that they survived the terrible treatment on the pirate ships. It was estimated that, on average, twenty-five to thirty percent of newts captured went through this experience; and that they would be capable of going through more. In the trade jargon they were known as Maccaroni, and recently had begun to be listed in regular business reports.

Two months later I was playing chess with Mr. Bellamy in the lounge of the Hotel France in Saigon; I wasn't contracted to a ship at that time, of course.

"Bellamy," I said to him, "you're a decent person, a gentleman, you might say. Doesn't it ever feel strange for you that you're doing something that, basically, is the lowest kind of slave trade?"

Bellamy shrugged his shoulders. "Newts are newts," he grumbled evasively.

"Two hundred years ago they said niggers are niggers."

"And weren't they right?" said Bellamy. "Check!"

I lost that game. It suddenly occurred to me that every move on the chessboard is old and has been played by somebody at some time. Maybe our own history has been played out by somebody at some time, and we just move our pieces about in the same moves to strike in the same way as people have always done. Maybe it was the same sort of quiet and decent Bellamy that used to hunt negroes on the Ivory Coast and transported them to Haïti and Louisiana, letting them die on the lower decks. That Bellamy, back in those days thought nothing of it. This Bellamy never thinks anything of it. That's why he's incorrigible.

"Black loses," declared Bellamy cheerfully, and got up to go for a walk.]

[11. We cite a report on the scientific congress in Paris by an eye-witness, r.d.]

Ier CONGRÈS D'URODÈLES

Known in short as the amphibians congress, the official title of the congress was somewhat longer: The First International Congress of Zoologists for Psychological Research into Caudate Amphibians. No true Parisian, though, likes long names such as this, so they referred to the learned professors who sat in the halls of the Sorbonne simply as Messieurs les Urodèles, the newt men. Or else, even shorter and less respectful, those zoo men.

So we went to have a look at those zoo men, not so much out of journalistic duty as out of simple curiosity. The curiosity, you understand, was not so much for the mostly aged and bespectacled scientists but for the...creatures (why do we feel difficulty in writing the word animal?) about whom so much has already been written both in scientific papers and in the popular press. There are some who say that what has been written is no more than journalistic humbug, but others say that these animals are in many respects more gifted than the Lord of the World and Crown of Creation himself, as man is still called—even after the World War and other incidents. I hoped that the venerable gentlemen taking part in the congress for research into the minds of caudate amphibians would provide a clear and final

answer for us laymen as to Andrias Scheuchzer's fabled intelligence, that they would say to us yes, this is an intelligent being, or at least tell us that they are as capable of civilisation as you or I. For this reason, we should consider what the future might hold for these creatures just as we should consider what the future might hold for mankind, a race once thought so wild and primitive. I tell you there was no answer given, nor any question of this sort put to the congress; modern science has become too...specialised to concern itself with problems of this sort.

So let us try to learn something about what a scientist would call animal psychology. That tall gentleman with the long beard now mounting the podium, that is the famous Professor Dubosque; he seems to be criticising some perverse theory by some esteemed colleague, but it is difficult for us to follow this side of his argument. Indeed, it is only after considerable time that we realise that this man speaking with the enthusiasm of a black magician is discussing the ability of Andrias to perceive colours and his ability to distinguish various shades. I cannot be sure that I understood properly, but I left with the impression that Andrias Scheuchzeri might be largely colour-blind, but that Professor Dubosque must be terribly short sighted going by the way he lifted his papers up to his thick, glasses that sparkled wildly in the light. Professor Dubosque was succeeded on the podium by the smiling Dr. Okagawa from Japan; he explained something about reaction times and other effects that result if he cut some kind sensory channel in Andrias's brain; then he told us how Andrias responds if part of the auditory system is crushed. Professor Rehmann, coming next, explained in detail how Andrias responds to electric shocks, at which a passionate dispute arose between him and Professor Bruckner. C'est un type, this Professor Bruckner: small, angry, and lively to an extent that verges on the tragic; amongst other things, he asserted that the sense organs of Andrias are as weak as those of man and that he has the same limited instincts; looked at from a purely biological point of view, Andrias is an animal as degenerate as man, and just like man he tries to make up for these biological deficiencies by what is known as intellect. However, the other specialists seem not to have taken Professor Bruckner seriously, probably because he had not severed any sensory nerves and had not shot any electric charges into any newts brain. He was followed by Professor van Dieten who slowly and almost reverentially described the disorders that are seen in Andrias after the right temporal lobe of the brain has been removed or the occipital lobe from the left hand side. Then there was a reading from Professor Devrient from America...

Forgive me, I am not quite sure what it was that Professor Devrient said in his reading as at that moment my head had begun to spin at the thought of what disorders would be seen in Professor Devrient if his right temporal lobe were removed; how the smiling Dr. Okagawa would respond if he were given electric stimulants and how professor Rehmann might behave if his auditory cavities were crushed. I also began to feel rather uncertain about my abilities to distinguish colours and my sensory-motor reactions. I started to be tortured with doubt as to whether (speaking strictly scientifically) we have any right to talk of our own (mankind's) spiritual life considering that we have not butchered each others cerebral lobes and cut sensory nerves. Should we turn on each other, scalpel in hand, to study each others spiritual life? As far as I am concerned I would be quite happy—in the interests of science—to smash professor Dubosque's glasses or shoot electric shocks into Professor Dieten's bald head and publish an article about how he reacts. In fact I can imagine how he would react quite vividly, although I find it harder to imagine what goes on in the would of Andrias Scheuchzer in experiments of this sort even though I know already that he is a boundlessly patient and good-natured creature as none of the lecturing professors mentioned any time that poor Andrias Scheuchzeri ever became angry. I am in no doubt that the First Congress on Caudate Amphibians has been a remarkable scientific success; but as soon as I have a day free I will be going to the Jardin des Plantes and straight to the tank where Andrias Scheuchzeri is held so that I can quietly say to him, "You, newt, your day will come one day...but please never think of examining the spiritual life of people!"

[12]. The uses to which newts can be put was researched in particular by Wuhrmann in Hamburg, and this is just one short extract from his papers on the subject:

BERICHT ÜBER DIE SOMATISCHE VERANLAGUNG DER MOLCHE

In the experiments carried out by myself on the great Pacific newt (*Andrias Scheuchzeri Tschudi*) in my laboratory in Hamburg, I was directed by one certain objective: to examine the newts ability to withstand changes to their environment and other external influences and thus to show how they can be put to practical use in various parts of the world and under varying conditions.

The first of the experiments was intended to ascertain how long the newt can survive away from water. The subjects were kept in a dry tank at a temperature of 40 to 50 degrees Celsius. After some hours they showed distinct signs of tiredness, but became more active if sprayed with water. After a period of twenty-four hours they lay motionless, moving nothing more than their eyelids; the pulse slowed, and all physical activities were reduced to a minimum. The animals were clearly suffering and the slightest movement cost them a great deal of effort. After three days they entered a state of cataleptic stillness (xerosis); they did not respond even if burned with an electric cauterisor. If the humidity of the air was raised, then they began to show certain signs of life (blinking if exposed to strong sources of light etc.) If a newt was thus dehydrated for seven days and then thrown into water it would it would take considerable time before it once again became active; but a large number of subjects deprived of water for a longer period perished. If left in direct sunshine they would die after only a few hours.

In another experiment, subjects were forced to turn a crank handle in the dark and in a very dry environment. After a period of three hours their activity began to decline but became rose again after spraying with copious amounts of water. If the spraying was frequently repeated the animals continued to turn the crank for up to seventeen, twenty or, in one case, even twenty-seven hours, whereas a human subject acting as control was already quite exhausted after only five hours of this mechanical activity. From these experiments we can conclude that newts are well suited to work on dry land provided that two obvious conditions are observed; they cannot be exposed to direct sunlight and they need to be sprayed with water from time to time.

The second series of experiments was intended to test the resistance of these originally tropical animals to cold. If cooled suddenly with water, the subjects would die from intestinal catarrh; however, if allowed slowly to acclimatise to a cold environment, the subjects would become used to it and after a period of eight months they even remained active in water at a temperature of 7° C, provided they were given extra fat in their diets (150 to 200 grams each). If the water temperature was reduced to below 5° C the subjects would become stiff (gelosis); in this state they could be frozen and kept in a block of ice for several months; when the ice was melted and the water temperature rose above 5° C they would begin, once again, to show signs of life and at seven to ten degrees they would become lively and seek food. It can be seen from this that there is no difficulty in acclimatising newts even to our own climate as far as northern Norway and Iceland. For polar conditions, further experiments would be needed.

In contrast with this, the subjects showed themselves remarkably sensitive to chemicals; in experiments using very dilute lye, discharge from factories, tanning fluids etc., the skin fell off their bodies in broad strips and the subjects died from some kind of inflammation of the gills. This means that, for the conditions found in our rivers, newts are practically unusable.

In another series of experiments, we were able to ascertain how long a newt is able to survive without food. They can be kept hungry for three weeks or even longer, showing no symptoms worse than a certain lethargy. I kept one of the newts hungry for a period of six months; after the first three months

it slept continuously and without any kind of movement; when the newt was then thrown into a tub of chopped liver it was so weak that it showed no reaction and had to be fed by hand. After some days it began to eat normally and the newt concerned could be put to use in further experiments.

The final series of experiments examined the newts ability to recover from injury. If a subjects tail was cut off it would regrow within fourteen days; this was attempted with one newt no less than seven times, each time with the same result. the same result was observed if the subjects feet were cut off. All four limbs and the tail were amputated from one subject; and within thirty days it was once again whole. If the thigh or shoulder bone of one of the animals is broken, the entire limb will fall off and a new one will be grown to replace it. The same result was obtained if a subjects eye or tongue was cut out; although one interesting observation was that the newt whose tongue had been removed lost the ability to speak and had to learn it all over again. If a newts head is amputated, or its body bisected anywhere between the neck and the pelvis, the animal dies. On the other hand, the stomach can be removed, part of the intestine, two thirds of the liver or other organs, without any disturbance to the animals life functions, so that we can say a newt that has been all but disembowelled is still capable of life. There is no other animal so resistant to any sort of injury than the true newt. This capacity would make of it a first-class, almost indestructible, animal for use in warfare if it were not for its peaceable nature and natural failure to defend itself.

...

Alongside these experiments, my assistant, Herr Doktor Walter Hinkel, examined the newts to ascertain whether they could be a source of useful raw materials. We were interested in particular to ascertain whether the body of a newt contains a large quantity of iodine or phosphorus; and our positive results suggest it might be possible to extract these important elements on an industrial scale. The skin of a newt in its natural state does not have any serious use, it can however be ground to a paste and subjected to high pressure to create an artificial leather which is light and strong enough to offer a serious alternative to leather from the hides of cattle. Because of its repulsive odour, the fat in a newt's body is of limited use, but its very low freezing temperature makes it of possible value as a lubricant for machinery. The meat of a newt was likewise considered unusable, and even as poisonous; if consumed in its raw state it causes serious pains, vomiting and sensory hallucinations. After a large number of experiments conducted on himself, however, Dr. Hinkel was able to ascertain that these harmful effects disappear if slices of the meat are steamed (in this way it resembles certain mushrooms), thoroughly rinsed, and soaked for twenty-four hours in a weak solution of hypermanganese. It can then be boiled or steamed and tastes like poor quality beef. In this way we consumed the newt whom we had come to know as Hans; Hans was an educated and intelligent animal with a special talent for scientific work; it had worked in Dr. Hinkel's department as a laboratory assistant and could even be trusted with delicate chemical analyses. We would spend entire evenings talking with Hans who enjoyed boundless curiosity. It became unfortunately necessary to dispose of Hans after he became blind after my experiments with trepanation. Hans's meat was dark and with a slight flavour of mushrooms, but left no unpleasant effects. There is no doubt that in the event of need arising from war it would be possible to use newt meat as a cheap substitute for beef.]

[13. This matter was reflected in a survey published in the Daily Star on the theme of Do Newts have a Soul? Here, we quote some of the statements by outstanding personalities from this survey (although of course with no guarantee of their truth):

Dear Sir,

A friend of mine, the Reverend H.B. Bertram, and I observed some newts over a long period while

they were building a dam in Aden. We also spoke with them on two or three occasions, but we found no indications of any higher feelings such as Honour, Faith, Patriotism or interest in Sport. And what else, may I ask, is there that could be seen as an indication of a soul?

Truly yours,

Colonel John W. Britton.]

[[14](#). I have never seen a newt, but I am convinced that a being without music is a being without a soul.

Toscani

Leaving the question of a soul to one side, whenever I have had the opportunity to observe newts they have seemed to me to have no individuality; each one seems to be like the next, equally diligent, equally competent—and equally indistinguishable. In a word, they meet one of the ideals of modern civilisation, Mediocrity.

André d'Artois

It is quite certain that they do not have a soul. This is something they have in common with man.

Yours, G.B. Shaw

Your question left me feeling somewhat perplexed. I know, for example, that my little Chinese dog, Bibi, has a little and a charming soul; and I know that my Persian cat, Sidi Hanum has a soul, so wonderful and so cruel! But newts? Yes, they are very talented and intelligent, the poor things are able to speak, calculate and make themselves very useful; but they are so ugly!

Yours, Madeleine Roche

It's alright for them to be newts just as long as they're not Marxists

Kurt Huber

They have no soul. If they had, then we would have to put them on an economic par with mankind, and that would be absurd.

Henry Bond

They ain't got no sex-appeal. And that means they ain't got a soul.

Mae West

They do have a soul, just as every other animal and every plant and every living thing has a soul. Great indeed is the secret of any life.

Sandrabbhārata Nath

They have an interesting swimming technique; there's a lot that we could learn from these newts, especially about long distance swimming.

Johnny Weissmüller]

[15. Viz *Mme. Louise Zimmermann, sa vie, ses idées, son oeuvre* (Alcan). We quote from this work the admiring memory of a newt who was one of her first pupils:

"Sitting beside our simple but clean and comfortable tank, *Mme. Zimmermann* would read the legends of Lafontaine to us. The dampness was unpleasant for her, but she paid no attention as she was so engrossed in her task as our teacher. She called us *mes petis chinois* because, just like the Chinese, we were unable to pronounce the letter *r*, but after some time she became so used to it that she began to pronounce her own name as *Mme. Zimmermann*. We tadpoles adored her; the little ones who still had not developed lungs and therefore were not able to leave the water, cried when they could no accompany her on her walks around the school garden. She was so loving and gentle that, as far as I know, there was only one occasion when she became cross; that was on one very hot day when the young lady who taught us history put on a bathing costume and got into the tank with us and told us about the struggle for independence in the Netherlands sitting up to her neck in water. Then our dear *Mme. Zimmermann* became truly angry: "Get out of there immediately *Mademoiselle*," she shouted with tears in her eyes, "get out and wash yourself, get out, get out". For us newts it was a clear but gentle lesson that we do not belong among people. Later on were grateful to our spiritual mother that she had made us conscious of this in such an emphatic and tactful way.

"When we had studied hard, she would read us some modern poetry, such as François Coppée, as a reward. It is really rather too modern, she would say, but, after all, even that is part of a good education nowadays. At the end of the school year there was an open day to which the prefect of Nice and other important persons in government and other fields of excellence were invited. The most gifted and advanced pupils who already had their lungs were dried off by the caretaker and dressed in white; and then, behind a thin curtain so that they would not alarm the ladies, they would read out the fables of Lafontaine, mathematical formulae and the history of the Capet dynasty with all the important dates. Then the prefect would give a long and beautiful speech of thanks to our dear headmistress that brought the day to an end. As much care was given to our physical development as to our spiritual development; once a month we were inspected by the local vet and every six months each of us was weighed. Our dear mentor laid especial emphasis on the need to give up the disgusting and base habit of dancing to the moon; but I am sorry to say that some of the older students did commit this bestial disgrace in secret when the moon was full. I hope our friend and, as it were, mother never learned about this; it would have broken her great, noble and loving heart."]

[16. Amongst others, the famous linguist, Curtius, in the publication, *Janua Linguarum aperta*, suggested that the only general language to be adopted by newts should be the Latin of the golden age of Vergil. It is today within our grasp, he declared, for Latin, this most perfect of languages, the richest in grammatical rules and most developed in science, to once more be a living language in use in all parts of the world. If those educated parts of mankind do not take this opportunity then you, *salamandrae*, *gens maritima*, you should grasp it yourselves; choose for your home language *eruditam linguam Latinam*, the only language worthy of being spoken throughout *orbis terrarum*. *Salamandrae*, should you resurrect the eternal language of gods and heroes into new life then it will be a service that lasts forever; for, *gens Tritonum*, with this language we would be accepting the legacy of Rome that was the ruler of the world.

In contrast with Curtius, a certain telegraph clerk in Lithuania by the name of Wolterras, working in collaboration with Pastor Mendelius, invented and developed a language specially for newts which he called puntic language; in it, he used elements from all the languages of the world, especially African languages. This newt language, as it became known, became quite popular, especially in the countries

of the north, although, unfortunately, only among humans; in Uppsala there was even a chair in newt language founded but among the newts themselves there is no record of it being spoken by a single one. The truth is that the most popular language among the newts was Basic English, which later became the newts official language.]

[17. Cf. an article by Jaromir Seidel-Novoměstský, preserved in Mr. Povondra's collection of cuttings.

OUR FRIEND IN THE GALÁPAGOS

After the painful loss of our dear aunt, the author Mrs. Bohumila Jandová-Střešovická, my wife, the poetess Jindřicha Seidlová-Chrudimská, and I undertook a journey around the world so that the charm of so many new and powerful impressions might go at least some way to assuage our sorrow. We arrived on the Galápagos Islands, so lonely and so swathed in legend, where we were spending two or three hours of free time in a promenade along the beach.

"See how beautiful the sunset is today, my dear," I said to my spouse. "Is it not as if the whole of the sky were drowning in a sea of blood and gold?"

"Do I have the pleasure of speaking to a Czech gentleman?" I heard a voice say in pure and correct Czech, not far behind us.

In surprise, we looked around us in that direction but there was no-one to be seen, only a large black newt sitting on a rock and holding in its hand something that looked like a book. In the course of our travels around the world we had already come across a large number of newts but had not had the opportunity of engaging with any of them in conversation. So, dear reader, you can understand our astonishment when, on an abandoned shore such as where we found ourselves, we came across a newt that addressed us in our own language.

"Who is that speaking?" I asked, in Czech.

"It was I who took that liberty, sir," the newt replied very politely as it stood up. "I'm afraid it was the first time in my life that I heard Czech being spoken and I was unable to resist."

"But how come," I asked in astonishment, "you speak Czech?"

"Well I was just occupied with studying the conjugations of the irregular verb, to be," the newt replied, "as this is a verb that is irregular in all languages of the world."

I pursued my question. "How where and why have you learned Czech?"

"It was by mere good fortune that this book came into my hands," the newt answered as it handed the aforementioned book to me; the book was Czech for Newts, and its pages bore the marks of frequent and diligent use. "It arrived on these shores as part of a consignment of books of an educational nature. I found myself offered the choice of *Geometry for the Sixth Form*, *The History of Military Strategy*, a guide to the Dolomites and *The Principles of Bimetallism*. This is the book I chose, and it has since become my second favourite. I already have its contents by heart, although it is still able to be a continual source of entertainment and education for me."

My lady wife and I expressed our unfeigned joy and wonderment at this news and the newt's near perfect pronunciation. "It is however unfortunate," the newt continued modestly, "that there is no-one here with whom I am able to speak Czech, and I am even uncertain as to whether the word for 'horse'

in the instrumental case is 'koni' or 'koňmi'."

"It is 'koňmi'," I informed the newt.

"But no, it is 'koni'," objected my lady wife.

"Would you be so kind as to tell me of the latest events in Prague, the mother of cities with its hundred towers?" asked our dear companion with great enthusiasm.

"The city is growing, my friend," I explained, pleased at his interest, and briefly adumbrated the recent efflorescence of our golden metropolis.

"This does indeed portend well for the future," replied the newt with unfeigned pleasure. "And are the heads of the Czech aristocrats still to be seen impaled around the towers?"

"That was a long time ago," I told him, somewhat (I confess) surprised by his question.

"That is indeed a pity," opined this likeable newt. "It was a historic monument of great value. We can be thankful to the Lord God that took so many remarkable historic monuments in the Thirty Years War! If I am not mistaken, the Czech lands were at that time transformed into a desert, stained with blood and tears. We can also be grateful that the negative genitive did not perish at that time. This book explains that it is currently disappearing, and I will be indeed sorry if that is indeed so."

"So you take an interest in our history," I exclaimed with joy.

"I do indeed," the newt replied. "Especially the subjugation that followed the Battle of White Hill and the Thirty Years War. I have read a great deal on the matter in this book. I'm sure you must be very proud of your three centuries of subjugation. It was a great era for the Czech people."

"Yes, it was a difficult time," I said, thinking to humour him. "A time of oppression and sorrow."

"And did you suffer greatly?" asked our friend with enthusiasm.

"We suffered unspeakable and unrelenting sorrows under the yoke of the oppressor."

"I'm very glad to hear it," the newt said with relief. "That's just what it says in the book. I'm glad to hear that it is true. It is an excellent book, sir, far better than *Geometry for the Sixth Form*. I would be very glad to stand on the memorable spot where the Czech aristocracy were executed, as well as on the other celebrated places of cruel wrongdoing."

"You must look in on us when you are there," I invited sincerely.

"Thank you for your kind invitation," said the newt with a bow. "I am, however, unfortunately not at liberty to travel as far as..."

"We could buy you," I declared. "That is to say, the national collection might be willing to procure the means to..."

"Hearty thanks," mumbled our friend, clearly touched. "But I have heard that the water of the Vltava is not good. You see, in river water we suffer severe diarrhoea." Then he considered the matter a little and added, "and I would also be sorry to abandon my dear little garden."

"Oh," exclaimed my lady wife, "I am also very fond of gardening! I should be very grateful if you

would show us something of the local flora!"

"With the greatest of pleasure, dear lady," said the newt, bowing most politely. "If, that is, it is of no concern to you that my garden is under water."

"Under water?"

"Indeed, two hundred metres under water."

"But how is it possible to cultivate flowers two hundred metres under water?"

"Sea anemones," our friend informed us, "including some very rare species. There are also starfish and sea cucumbers, not to mention the bushes of coral. To cultivate one rose is to cultivate one's homeland, as the poet tells us."

It was necessary for us to make our departure, for the ship had already given its signal. "And what message do you have, Mr...." I asked, uncertain as to the name of our dear companion.

"My name is Boleslav Jablonský," the newt told us shyly. "I consider it to be a very beautiful name, sir. I chose it myself from this book."

"And what message do you have, Mr. Jablonský for us to convey back to our people?"

The newt considered the matter for a short while. "You may tell your compatriots," he said slowly, deeply moved, "tell them...that they should always maintain the ancient disagreements among the Slavonic peoples...that they should always retain Lipany and the defeat at White Hill in their grateful memory. Farewell,..." he ended suddenly, attempting to overcome his feelings.

As we departed in the dinghy back to the ship, full of thoughts and tender feelings, our friend stood on the rocks and waved to us, and as he did so he seemed to call something out to us.

"What was that, he cried?" asked my lady wife.

"I do not know," I answered, "but it sounded something like, 'give my greetings to the mayor, Dr. Bax'."]

[18. In Germany in particular all vivisection was strictly forbidden, albeit, of course, only for Jewish researchers.]

[19. This seems also to have affected certain ethical movements. Among the articles in Mr. Povondra's collection was a declaration published in newspapers all around the world, translated into many different languages and even signed by the Duchess of Huddersfield. It read:

"Women of the world, in the interests of decency and morality the League for the Protection of Newts calls on you to contribute your handiwork to our campaign to provide newts with suitable clothing. The most suitable garment would be a skirt 40 cm. long, 60 cm. at the waist and preferably fitted with elastic. The skirt should be pleated to enable better ease of movement for the wearer. For tropical areas, a mere apron will be adequate, fitted with the means to fasten it at the waist, which could be made from very simple working materials such as some of your own discarded clothing. In this way you will remove the need for the unfortunate newts to work in public and in the presence of human beings without any sort of decent covering, which they cannot do otherwise than feel as an insult to

their dignity and which could only be a cause of unease for any decent person, especially women and mothers."

There is no indication anywhere that this call met with any success; it is not known whether any newts ever chose to wear a skirt or an apron; it would probably have got in their way underwater and been difficult to keep up. And wherever the newts were separated from human beings behind a wooden fence there would have been, of course, no reason for either humans or newts to feel any shame or emotional discomfort.

The idea that the newts needed to be protected from harassment of various sorts was mainly because of dogs, which never were able to get used to them and would chase the newts in a barking frenzy, even under water and despite the fact that if they ever bit a newt it would leave a caustic slime in their mouths. There were even times when the newts would defend themselves and more than one doughty hound was killed with a pickaxe or crowbar. Between dogs and newts there developed a permanent, deadly enmity which was intensified, rather than weakened, when a physical barrier was put between them. But that is often the case, and not only between dogs. These fences, coated with tar and stretching often along hundreds and hundreds of kilometres of coastline, were also used to teach the newts proper behaviour, and along the whole length of them they were painted with large letters urging the, for instance:

Your work—Your success

Value every second!

The day has only 86,400 seconds!

You're only worth as much as you work

A meter of dam can be built in 57 minutes!

The worker serves us all

Who will not work, let him not eat!

And so on. Considering that these wooden fences stretched along more than three hundred thousand kilometres of coastline around the world, you can imagine how many encouraging slogans would fit onto them and how much they were of benefit to everyone.]

[20. The first trial of a newt, that took place in Durban, was of great interest to the press all round the world (viz Mr. Povondra's collection of cuttings). The port authority in A. employed a working colony of newts. In the course of time they multiplied so much that the port soon did not have enough room for them all; some tadpoles began to establish new colonies out on the surrounding coastline. Part of this coastline was on the property of farmer B. and he asked the port authority to remove the newts from his private beach because he liked to bathe there. The port authority refused, saying the matter was nothing to do with them as the newts, having settled on his land, had become his private property. While these protracted negotiations continued, the newts, partly from instinct and partly because of the eagerness for work that had been inculcated in them, began, without the appropriate orders or permission, to construct a dyke and a dock on Mr. B.'s stretch of beach. At this, Mr. B. made a complaint with the appropriate office to for damage to his property. At first the complaint was rejected on the grounds that Mr. B.'s land, far from being damaged, had been enhanced by the newts' activities, but this decision was overturned and verdict was passed in favour of the complainant on the grounds

that no-one should have to tolerate a neighbour's domesticated animals on his land. The port authority in A. was held responsible for all the damage caused by the newts just as a farmer would be held responsible for damage caused to a neighbour by his cattle. The port authority, of course, objected that it could not be held responsible for the newts because in the sea they could not be fenced in. The neighbour declared that in his view the damage caused by the newts should be seen in the same way as damage caused by chickens which likewise could not be fenced in because they were able to fly. Counsel for the port authority asked how his client was expected to remove the newts or force them to leave Mr. B.'s private beach. The judge answered that that was no concern of the court. Counsel asked whether it would be acceptable to the honourable judge if the port authority had these undesirable newts shot. The judge answered that as an Englishman and a gentleman he would consider that highly inappropriate as well as a violation of Mr. B.'s hunting rights. The port authority was therefore required to remove the newts from the complainant's private property, to remove the damage caused by the newts' having constructed dams and waterworks there and to restore that stretch of beach to its original state. Counsel for the defendant asked whether his client would be allowed to use salamanders for this demolition work. The judge replied that this would certainly not be allowed unless the complainant gave his permission, which was in doubt because the complainants' wife found the newts repellent and was unable to bathe on a beach infested with newts. The port authority objected that without newts it would not be possible to remove the waterworks constructed below the waterline. At this, the judge declared that it was no matter of the court to make decisions on technical details and had no wish to do so; courts were there to protect private property, not to decide what was feasible and what not.

In this way the matter was brought to its end. It is not known how the port authority in A. got round this difficult problem; but the whole matter goes to show that the newt problem will need to be regulated with new judicial provisions that address it directly.]

[21. There were some who took the matter of equal rights for newts literally, and asked that salamanders be allowed to establish government offices under water and on land (J. Courtaud); or that they should form fully armed underwater regiments with their own underwater commander (General M. S. Desfours); or even that mixed marriages between newts and humans should be allowed (Louis Pierrot, avocat). scientists objected that marriages of this sort would not be possible; but Mister Pierrot declared that it was not a matter of natural possibilities but of a legal principle and that he himself would be willing to take a newt female for his wife in order to show that this reform of the legal principle of marriage need not remain merely on paper. (Later in his career, Mister Pierrot became a highly sought after divorce lawyer.)

At this point it is worth mentioning that the press, especially in the United States, would occasionally publish reports of girls who had been raped by a newt while bathing. As a result, the number of cases in America where a newt was captured and lynched or burned alive multiplied rapidly. Scientists came forward to protest at this folk custom, insisting that it their anatomy made it physically impossible for any newt to commit a crime of this sort, but their words were in vain; too many girls had sworn that they had been assaulted by a newt and so for any regular American the matter was clear. Later on at least, the sport of burning a newt alive was only allowed to take place on a Saturday and under the supervision of the fire brigade. The Society for the Prevention of the Lynching of Newts was established under the leadership of the Reverend Robert J. Washington and counted hundreds of thousands of members, of whom almost all were mere negroes, including the Reverend Washington. The American press began to maintain that this was a political movement with the intention of overturning the government; as a result the areas inhabited by negroes came under attack and many of them were themselves burned alive, especially those who prayed for Brother Newt in their churches.

The climax of indignation against negroes reached its peak when a black church in Gordonville (L.) was burned down and the fire spread to the whole of the city. (But this is only incidental to the story of the newts.)

We can at least list a few of the advantages that the newts really did receive; each salamander was listed in a registry of newts with the place where he worked; it was required to obtain an official residence permit; it had to pay income tax which, as the newts received no wages as money, was paid by its owner who would then deduct it from the newt's food; it was likewise required to pay rent for the coastline where it lived, local tax and contribute to the erection and upkeep of the wooden fences; school taxes and other public costs; in short, we have to admit that the newts, in this respect, were treated no differently than any other citizen and in this way enjoy full equality.]

[22. Viz encyclical from the holy father, *Mirabilia Dei Opera*.]

[23. There were so many publications on this subject that simply to list them would occupy two large volumes.]

[24. The papers in Mr. Povondra's collection included a highly pornographic brochure which, according to police reports, had been published in B***. It is not possible to quote the contents of this "private publication, issued in the interests of scientific knowledge" in any respectable book. Instead we will merely cite a few of its details:

The temple of the salamander cult, to be found at number *** in *** Street, has, at its centre, a large pool panelled with dark red marble. The water in the pool is perfumed with fragrant essences, warmed, and illuminated from below with continuously changing coloured lights; all else in the temple is darkness. At the chant of the newt liturgy, the entirely naked followers of the cult step into the rainbow coloured pool down marble steps, men on one side, women on the other. Many of its adherents belong to the highest society, such as Baroness M., S., the film star, D., the member of parliament, and many other outstanding personalities. Suddenly, a blue light shines on an enormous marble block that emerges from the water and on which there is an ancient black newt, lying at rest but breathing heavily. This is Master Salamander. There is a period of silence, and then Master Salamander begins to speak; he calls on the faithful to devote themselves and with all their souls to the forthcoming ceremonies of the salamander dance and to revere the Great Salamander. Then he raises himself and begins to sway and vigorously twist the upper half of his body. The male members of the faithful, immersed up to their necks in water, begin also to twist and swing in a frenzy that becomes faster and faster in order, so they say, to create the sexual medium while the salamanders utter loud ts-ts-ts and raucous croaking. Then the coloured lights under the water go out one after another and the orgy begins.

We cannot be sure that this description is entirely reliable, but it is certain that the police in all the major cities of Europe not only spent large resources on persecuting these salamander sects but also spent large resources on covering up the enormous scandals associated with them. It seems that although the cult of the salamander was very widespread its ceremonies did not always take place in the fairy tale splendour described here and that, among the lower classes, they took place on dry land.]

[25. The Catholic prayers mentioned above also defined the newts as a kind of *Dei Creatura de gente Molche* (Creatures of God in the Nation of Newts).]

[26. The declaration, preserved among Mr. Povondra's papers, went as follows:

COMRADES NEWTS!

The capitalist world order has found its latest victim. When the proletariat, newly aware of class consciousness, made the putrescent tyranny of capitalism shake in fear of revolution, the exploiters had

to find a new servant to bend to its needs and took you, Workers of the Sea, to be the new slaves of bourgeois civilisation, took your spirit, subjected you to repressive laws, took away any freedom you ever had and did all in its power for you to be exploited by its friends with impunity.

(14 lines missing)

Working newts! The time is coming when you will be aware of the burden of slavery to which you are subject

(7 lines missing)

and claim your rights as a class and as a nation!

Comrades newts! The revolutionary proletariat of the world reaches out to you

(11 lines missing)

with all means available. Establish trades unions, choose shop stewards, establish a strike fund! Remember that the enlightened workers will not let you down in your rightful struggle, and hand in hand with you will mount the final assault

(9 lines missing)

Oppressed and revolutionary newts of the world, unite! The final battle has begun.

Signed: *Molokov*]

[[27](#). We were able to find only a few declarations of this sort in Mr. Povondra's collection; the others were probably burned over the years by Mrs. Povondra. Of the remaining material, we can at least cite a few titles:

Newts, throw down your arms! (Pacifist manifesto)

Newts, throw the Jews out! (German flysheet)

Comrades Newts! (Anarchist-Bakuninists)

Comrades Newts! (Sea scouts)

Newts, our friends! (Public address by the Union of Aquarists' and Marine Life Cultivators' Societies)

Our friends, the Newts! (Society for Moral Regeneration)

Citizens Newts! (Citizens' Reform Society, Dieppe)

Newts, our colleagues, come and join our ranks! (Society for the Support of Former Seamen)

Our colleagues, Newts! (Aegir Sailing Club)

One of these declarations had been carefully glued in place by Mr. Povondra and seems therefore to have been especially important. We therefore quote it here in full:

[illegible]

]

[28]. In Mr. Povondra's collection we found a lightweight, rather superficial description of this celebration, although, unfortunately, only the first half. The second half seems to have become lost.

Nice, 6th May. There's lively activity today in the light and charming offices of the Institute for Mediterranean Studies on the Promenade des Anglais; two agents de police are holding the clear for invited guests to stride up the red carpet into the welcoming and pleasantly cool amphitheater. There's the smiling mayor of Nice there and the local prefect in his top hat, there's a general in his light blue uniform and gentlemen wearing the red button of the League of Honor, ladies of a certain age (terracotta seems to be the fashionable color this season), vice-admirals, journalists, professors and elderly celebrities from all round the world such as you find on the Côte d'Azur at any time of year. Suddenly something happens to disturb this honorable assembly when a strange little creature appears and tries to make its way unseen among them; it's covered from head to foot in some kind of long black cowl or cape, its eyes are covered with enormous dark glasses, and suddenly and unsure of itself it tries to enter the crowded vestibule. "Hé, vous," shouts a policeman, "qu'est-ce que vous cherchez ici?" But then one of the distinguished university staff appears beside the startled figure and then it's this way, cher docteur, as you please, cher docteur. This is Dr. Charles Mercier, an educated newt who, today, is due to give a lecture to all the best people on the Côte d'Azur! Let us hurry inside to find a seat in the excited auditorium!

On the podium sit Monsieur le Maire, Monsieur Paul Mallory the great poet, *Mme. Maria Dimineanu* on behalf of the International Institute for Intellectual Co-operation, the rector of the Institute for Mediterranean Studies, and other official figures; to one side of the podium there's a lectern, and beside it...yes folks, that really is a tin bathtub I can see there, a perfectly ordinary tin bathtub such as you might have in your own bathroom. Two porters accompany the timid figure, concealed beneath his long cape, onto the podium, and the applause from the audience seems somewhat ill-at-ease. Dr. Charles Mercier bows shyly and looks round, uncertain as to where he is to be seated. "Voilà, Monsieur," whispers one of the porters, pointing out the tin bathtub. "That's for you, sir." It's obvious that Dr. Mercier feels highly embarrassed and is uncertain how he's to turn down such attentiveness by his hosts; he tries his best to sit down in the tub without drawing attention to the situation but his long cape gets caught up in his feet and fall down into the tub with a loud splash that soaks all these

gentlemen on the podium who, needless to say, pretend that nothing at all has happened; somebody in the audience begins to laugh hysterically, but the people in the front row look round and admonish him with a loud 'shh!'. Then Monsieur le Maire et Député stands up and begins to speak. Ladies and gentlemen, he says, it is my honor to welcome to the beautiful city of Nice Doctor Charles Mercier, the outstanding scientist among our near neighbors who lie in the depths of the sea. (Dr. Mercier stands up in the water and gives the audience a deep bow.) This is the first time in the history of civilization that land and sea have worked hand in hand in intellectual pursuits. Until now, there was a clear boundary that our spiritual lives were not able to cross; that was the oceans that surround us. We were able to sail across them, we were able to plough our way through the waves in our boats in any direction we wanted; but, ladies and gentlemen, it was not possible for civilization to penetrate beneath its surface. The sea that surrounds the little pieces of land occupied by mankind has always, until now, been something wild and unknown; at same time as it offered us astonishing possibilities it has always kept us away; on the one hand we saw the rise of civilization and on the other we saw nature, eternal and never changing. The barriers created for us by the oceans, dear listeners, are now falling away. (Applause) It is to us, the children of this great age we live in, that comes the great fortune to be eye-witnesses to the process of our spiritual home expanding, to see it burst out from its own shores and enter the waves of the sea, to conquer the depths of the sea and combine the ancient knowledge of the oceans with the modernity of civilization. That is an inspiring prospect! (Bravo!) Ladies and gentlemen, it is now that, for the first time ever, the culture of the oceans has appeared and here with us today we have its most eminent representative whom we have the honor to welcome here among us. Our planet has become a planet that is truly and wholly civilized. (Enthusiastic applause. Dr. Mercier, in the bathtub, stands and bows.)

Monsieur le Maire and Député then turned to Dr. Mercier, who was supporting himself on the edge of the bathtub, deeply touched and sucking hard on his gills; My dear doctor, as a great scientist you will be able to convey our best wishes to your friends and compatriots on the seabed, to tell them how we admire them and sympathise with them. We send our greetings to those at the forefront of progress and knowledge, a forefront which, step by step, will colonise the endless expanses of the sea and create a new world of culture on the seabed. I can already see the rise of a new Athens, a new Rome in the depths of the oceans, the efflorescence of a new Paris with an underwater Louvre and an underwater Sorbonne with an underwater Arc de Triomphe and an underwater War Memorial, with underwater theaters and underwater boulevards. Allow me to express one of my most secret thoughts: it is my fondest hope that in the blue waves of the Mediterranean, just here off the shore of our city, there will be a new Nice, a glorious Nice that will be your Nice with her own majestic avenues under the sea, her own meadows and promenades alongside our Côte d'Azur. We welcome you, and look forward to a deeper acquaintance; I am personally convinced that closer social and scientific contacts between us, making such an auspicious beginning here today, will lead our nations to ever closer cultural and political co-operation in the interests of all of mankind, world peace, prosperity and progress. (Long applause).

Now, Dr. Charles Mercier stands up and does his best to thank the mayor and representative of Nice; but he seems to be too touched by the occasion, or else his pronunciation is rather too strange for us to understand; all that I could catch from what he said with such difficulty was a few words; if I am not mistaken they were "great honor", "cultural contacts" and "Victor Hugo". Then, clearly overwhelmed by the experience, he hid himself back in the bathtub.

After this it was the turn of Paul Mallory to speak, but what he said was not so much a speech as an anthem, lit with the poetry of deep philosophy. I thank my fate, he said, that I have lived to see one of mankind's most beautiful myths fulfilled and confirmed in such a strange way. Instead of the mythical Atlantis sinking under the waves we have the astonishing sight of a new Atlantis emerging from the

deep. Doctor Mercier, you are a poet of geometry, you, along with your learned colleagues, are the first ambassadors from this new world from the sea, not Aphrodite born of the foam but Pallas Anadyomene. Strangest of all though, of a mystery incomparable with...

(end missing)]

[29. Among Mr. Povondra's papers was a rather unclear newspaper photograph showing both newt delegates going up the steps onto the Quai du Mont Blanc on Lake Geneva to take their places at the commission. Lake Lemman seems to have been their official accommodation.

The Commission for the Study of the Newt Question achieved a great and useful function, mainly by settling all difficult questions in politics and economics. It was in permanent session for many years and met on more than thirty occasions, diligently concerned with unifying the international terminology for newts which, up till then, had been in hopeless chaos. Besides the scientific terms of 'salamander', 'newt', 'batrachus' and so on, which had begun to take on a rather disrespectful character, there were many other different names suggested. the newts could be referred to as 'tritons', 'neptunids', 'bathyds', 'Abyssals', 'hydrions', 'gens de mer', 'soumarins' and so on. It the task of the commission to select the most suitable name, and it was vigorously active in this affair right up to the end of the newt age; although it never did arrive at any final and unambiguous conclusion.]

[30. Mr. Povondra also included two or three articles to do with national politics in his collection. These were about modern youth, and were probably only by mistake that he thought they were about the civilisation of the newts.]

[31. One gentleman from the north of Prague told Mr. Povondra about the time he was bathing off the beach at Katwijk aan Zee. He had swum far out into the sea when the lifeguard called out to him, saying he should return to the beach. The gentleman concerned paid no attention and swam further out; then the lifeguard jumped into his boat and paddled out after him. "Swimming isn't allowed here, you know," he said to him.

"Why on Earth not?" the gentleman asked.

"There are newts here."

"I'm not afraid of newts," he objected.

"They have some kind of factory or something under the water," the lifeguard admonished. "Nobody is allowed to bathe here."

"But why not?"

"The newts don't like it."]

[32. This suggestion was clearly to do with large scale political propaganda, and thanks to Mr. Povondra's collection we have it here at hand. It read:

人造人米國にて棄身罪経謹聞

つ最是二種の扱今苦痛を悟いが、今然るに「戦争の今目す
氏が前ま限全く燃然と感うにしてやなま右いロ」

幸更金にのみ見らなかば間無ろめ自分てられ右

ばせすお種の指示かも「ドーシ」君後で痛知ら幸福目向で
 五筆にうらまー「分れそいロツへ中ずす」「とか」

「またよな目下そのじやワロツサハ存亡供して刀槍の有様
 柙一おなになん反易強烈で、弄道れな。がせよ明か間に
 企つ人並人………」

About the Author

Son of a doctor, Capek studied philosophy in Paris, Berlin, and Prague. Becoming a journalist, Karel was firmly entrenched between mutual hatreds for the Nazis and the Communists; promoting a free and democratic Czechoslovakia and supporting those political figures of like mind.



Capek's first major success came as a playwright when he created the robot in his 1921 play R. U. R., (Rossum's Universal Robots); intended as a satire against the Czech agrarian feudal system. Karel authored other less successful works but outstanding above them was the utopian type fantasy novel, War with the Newts, another political statement.

Karel's brother, Josef, contributed to the early works but was also a painter and illustrated several of the books. Capek suffered from spinal problems almost all of his life, and that frailty of frame would help to overcome him in the end.

When the Nazi scourge overtook Europe, Kapek was forced to surrender his dreams along with his spirit and, thereby, his life, when Czechoslovakia was abandoned by the Western nations in the pact made at Munich. He saw his world and time as lost, yet Kapek would not leave the country or his beautiful Prague, fully realizing that the decision to stay meant his death. But rather than death coming at the hands of his enemies, it came from pneumonia...in his home, in his bed, with his wife nearby. Others would not be so lucky.

Karel Capek was the most famous author in Czechoslovakia in the first half of the 20th century, and his works inspired the ill fated revolt against Communist rule 30 years later. His works are widely translated even today and biographies appear regularly.