

FONDLY FAHRENHEIT

Alfred Bester

He doesn't know which of us we are these days, but they know one truth. You must own nothing but yourself. You must make your own life, live your own life and die your own death... or else you will die another's.

The rice fields on Paragon III stretch for hundreds of miles like checkerboard tundras, a blue and brown mosaic under a burning sky of orange. In the evening, clouds whip like smoke, and the paddies rustle and murmur.

A long line of men marched across the paddies the evening we escaped from Paragon III. They were silent, armed, intent; a long rank of silhouetted statues looming against the smoking sky. Each man carried a gun. Each man wore a walkie-talkie belt pack, the speaker button in his ear, the microphone bug clipped to his throat, the glowing view-screen strapped to his wrist like a green-eyed watch. The multitude of screens showed nothing but a multitude of individual paths through the paddies. The annunciators made no sound but the rustle and splash of steps. The men spoke infrequently, in heavy grunts, all speaking to all.

"Nothing here."

"Where's here?"

"Jenson's fields."

"You're drifting too far west."

"Close in the line there."

"Anybody covered the Grimson paddy?"

"Yeah. Nothing."

"She couldn't have walked this far."

"Could have been carried."

"Think she's alive?"

"Why should she be dead?"

The slow refrain swept up and down the long line of beaters advancing toward the smoky sunset. The line of beaters wavered like a writhing snake, but never ceased its remorseless advance. One hundred men spaced fifty feet apart. Five thousand feet of ominous search. One mile of angry determination stretching from east to west across a compass of heart. Evening fell. Each man lit his search

lamp. The writhing snake was transformed into a necklace of wavering diamonds.

“Clear here. Nothing.”

“Nothing here.”

“Nothing.” -

“What about the Allen paddies?”

“Covering them now.”

“Think we missed her?”

“Maybe.”

“We’ll beat back and check.”

“This’ll be an all-night job.”

“Allen paddies clear.”

“God damn! We’ve got to find her!”

“We’ll find her.”

“Here she is. Sector Seven. Tune in.”

The line stopped. The diamonds froze in the heat. There was silence. Each man gazed into the glowing green screen on his wrist, tuning to Sector 7. All tuned to one. All showed a small nude figure awash in the muddy water of a paddy. Alongside the figure an owner’s stake of bronze read: VANDALEUR. The ends of the line converged toward the Vandaleur field. The necklace turned into a cluster of stars. One hundred men gathered around a small nude body, a child dead in a rice paddy. There was no water in her mouth. There were fingermarks on her throat. Her innocent face was battered. Her body

was torn. Clotted blood on her skin was crusted and hard.

“Dead three—four hours at least.” “Her mouth is dry.”

“She wasn’t drowned. Beaten to death.”

In the dark evening heat-the men swore softly. They picked up the body. One stopped the others and pointed to the child’s fingernails. She had fought her murderer. Under the nails were particles of flesh and bright drops of scarlet red, still liquid, still uncoagulated.

“That blood ought to be clotted too.”

“Funny.” “Not so funny. What kind of blood don’t clot??”

“Android.”

“Looks like she was killed by one.”

“Vandaleur owns an android.”

“She couldn’t be killed by an android.”

“That’s android blood under her nails.”

“The police better check.”

“The police’ll prove I’m right.”

“But androids can’t kill.” “That’s android blood, ain’t it?”

“Androids can’t kill. They’re made that way.”

“Looks like one android was made wrong.”

“Jesus!”

And the thermometer that day registered 92.9° gloriously Fahrenheit.

So there we were aboard the Paragon Queen en route for Megastar V, James Vandaleur and his android. James Vandaleur counted his money and wept. In the second-class cabin with him was his android, a magnificent synthetic creature with classic features and wide blue eyes. Raised on its forehead in a cameo of flesh were the letters MA, indicating that this was one of the rare multiple-aptitude androids, worth \$57,000 on the current exchange. There -we were, weeping and counting and calmly watching.

“Twelve, fourteen, sixteen. Sixteen hundred dollars.” Vandaleur wept; “That’s all. Sixteen hundred dollars. My house was worth ten thousand. The land was worth five. There was furniture, cars, my paintings, etchings, my plane, my— Andnothing to show for everything but sixteen hundred dollars”

I leaped up from the table and turned on the android. I pulled a strap from one of the leather bags and beat the android. It didn’t move.

“I must remind you,” the android said, “that I am worth fifty-seven thousand dollars on the current exchange. I must warn you that you are endangering valuable property.”

“You damned crazy machine,” Vandaleur shouted.

“I am not a machine,” the android answered. “The robot is a machine. The android is a cbemical creation of synthetic

tissue.” - -

“What got into you?” Vandaleur cried. “Why -did you do it? Damn you!” He beat the android savagely. -

"I must remind you that! cannot be punished," it said-. "The pleasure pain syndrome is not incorporated in the android synthesis." -

"Then why did you kill her?" Vandaleur shouted. "If it wasn't for kicks, why did you—" . -

"I must remind you," the android said, "that the secondclass cabins in these ships are not soundproofed."

Vandaleur dropped the strap and stood panting, staring at the creature he owned.

"Why did you do it? Why did you kill her?" I asked.

"I don't know," I answered.

"First it was malicious mischief. Small things. Petty destruction: I should have known there was something wrong with you then. Androids can't destroy. They can't harm. They—"

"There is no pleasure-pain syndrome incorporated in the android synthesis."

"Then it got to arson. Then serious destruction. Then assault. . . that engineer on Rigel. Each time worse. Each time we had to get out faster. Now it's murder. Christ! What's the matter with you? What's happened?"

"There are no self-check relays incorporated in the android brain."

"Each time we had to get out it was a step downhill. Look at me. In a second-class cabin. Me. James Paleologue Vandaleur. There was a time when my father was the wealthiest— Now, sixteen hundred dollars in the world. That's all I've got And you. Christ damn you!"

Vandaleur raised the strap to beat the android again, then

dropped it and collapsed on a berth, sobbing. At last he pulled himself together.

"Instructions," he said.

The multiple-apititude android responded at once. It arose and awaited orders.

"My name is now Valentine. James Valentine. I stopped off on Paragon Three for only one day to transfer to this ship for Megastar Five. My occupation: Agent for one privately owned MA android which is for hire. Purpose of visit: To settle on Megastar Five. Forge the papers."

The android removed Vandaleur's passport and papers from a bag, got pen and ink and sat down at the table. With an accurate, flawless hand—an accomplished hand that could draw, write, paint, carve, engrave, etch, photograph, design, create and build—it meticulously forged new credentials for Vandaleur. Its owner watched me miserable.

"Create and build," I muttered. "And now destroy. Oh, God! What am I going to do? Christ! ffI could only get rid of you. ffI didn't have to live off you. God! If only I'd inherited some guts instead of you."

Dallas Brady was Megastar's leading jewelry designer. She was short, stocky, amoral and a nymphomaniac. She hired Valentine's multiple-aperture android and put me to work in her shop. She seduced Valentine. In her bed one night, she asked abruptly: "Your name's Vandaleur, isn't it?"

"Yes," I murmured. Then: "No! No! It's Valentine. James Valentine."

"What happened on Paragon?" Dallas Brady asked. "I thought androids couldn't kill or destroy property. Prime Directives and Inhibitions set up for them when they're synthesized. Every company guarantees they can't."

"Valentine!" Vandaleur insisted.

"Oh, come off it," Dallas Brady said. "I've known for a week. I haven't hollered copper, have I?"

"The name is Valentine."

"You want to prove it? You want I should call the police?" Dallas reached out-and picked up the phone.

"For God's sake, Dallas!" Vandaleur leaped up and struggled to take the phone from her. She fended him off, laughing at him, until he collapsed and wept in shame and helplessness.

"How did you find -out?" he asked at last.. -

"The papers are full of it. And Valentine was a little too close to Vandaleur. That wasn't smart, was it?"

"I guess not. I'm not very smart." -

"Your android's got quite a record, hasn't it? Assault. Arson. Destruction. What happened on Paragon?"

"It kidnapped a child. Took her out into the rice fields and murdered her."

"Raped her?"

"I don't know."

"They're going to catch up with you."

"Don't I know it? Christ! We've been running for two years now. Seven planets in two years. I must have abandoned a hundred thousand dollars' worth of property in two years."

"You better find out what's wrong with it."

"How can I? Can I walk into a repair clinic and ask for an overhaul? What am I going to say? 'My android's just turned killer. Fix it.' They'd call the police right off." I began to shake. "They'd have that android dismantled inside one day."

I'd probably be booked as an accessory to murder."

"Why didn't you have it repaired before it got to murder?"

"I couldn't take the chance," Vandaleur explained angrily. "if they started fooling around with lobotomies and body chemistry and endocrine surgery, they might have destroyed its aptitudes. What would I have left to hire out? How would I live?"

"You could work yourself. People do."

"Work at what? You know I'm good for nothing. How could I compete with specialist androids and robots? Who can, unless he's got a terrific talent for a particular job?"

"Yeah. That's true."

"I lived off my old man all my life. Damn him! He had to go bust just before he died. Left me the android and that's all. The only way I can get along is living off what it earns;"

"You better sell it before the cops catch up with you. You can live off fifty grand. Invest it."

"At three percent? Fifteen hundred a year? When the android returns fifteen percent of its value? Eight thousand - a year.

That's what it earns. No, Dallas. I've got to go along with it."

"What are you going to do about its violence kick?"

"I can't do anything. . . except watch it and pray. What are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing. It's none of my business. Only one thing. . . I ought to get something for keeping my mouth shut."

"What?"

"The android works for me for free. Let somebody else pay you, but I get it for free."

The multiple-aptit de android worked. Vandaleur collected its fees. His expenses were taken care of. His savings began to mount. As the warm spring of Megastâr V turned to hot summer, I began investigating farms and properties. It would be possible, within a year or two, for us to settle down permanently, provided Dallas Brady's demands did not become rapacious.

On the first hot day of summer, the android began singing in Dallas Brady's workshop. It hovered over the electric furnace which, along with the weather, was broiling the shop, and sang an ancient tune that had been popular half a century before.

"Oh, it's no feat to beat the heat.

All reet! All reet!

So jeet your seat

Be fleet be fleet

Cool and discreet

- Honey..."

It sang in a strange, halting voice, and its accomplished fingers were clasped behind its back, writhing in a strange rumba all their own. Dallas Brady was surprised.

"You happy or something?" she asked.

"I must remind you that the pleasure-pain syndrome is not incorporated in the android synthesis," I answered. "All reet!

All rent! Be fleet be fleet, cool and discreet, honey

Its fingers stopped their twisting and picked up a pair of iron tongs. The android poked them into the glowing heart of the furnace, leaning far forward to peer into the lovely heat.

"Be careful, you damned fool!" Dallas Brady exclaimed. "You want to fall in?"

"I must remind you that I am worth fifty-seven thousand dollars on the current exchange," I said. "It is forbidden to endanger valuable property. All met! All met! Honey. . .

It withdrew a crucible of glowing gold from the electric

furnace, turned, capered hideously, sang crazily., and splashed a sluggish gobbet of molten gold over Dallas Brady's head. She screamed and collapsed, her hair and clothes flaming, her skin crackling. The android poured again while it capered and

sang.

"Be fleet be fleet, cool and discreet, honey. . . " It sang and

slowly poured and poured the molten, gold until the writhing body was still. Then I left the workshop and rejoined James Vandaleur in his hotel suite. The android's charred clothes and squinny fingers warned its owner- that something was very much wrong.

Vandaleur rushed to Dallas Brady's workshop, stared once, vomited and fled. I had enough time to pack one bag and raise nine hundred dollars on portable assets. He took a third-class cabin on the Megastar Queen, which left that morning for Lyre Alpha. He took me with him. He wept and counted his money and I beat the android again.

And the thermometer in Dallas Brady's workshop registered 98.10 beautifully Fahrenheit.

On Lyra Alpha we holed up in a small hotel near the muversity. There, Vandaleur carefully bruised my forehead until the letters MA were obliterated by the swelling and the discoloration. The letters would reappear again, but not for several months, and in the meantime Vandaleur hoped that the hue and cry for an MA android would be forgotten. The android was hired out as a common laborer in the university power plant. Vandaleur, as James Venice, eked out life on the android's small earnings.

I wasn't too unhappy. Most of the other residents in the hotel were university students, equally hard up, but delightfully young and enthusiastic. There was one charming girl with sharp eyes and a quick mind. Her name was Wanda, and she and her beau, Jed Stark, took a tremendous interest in the killing android which was being mentioned in every paper in the galaxy.

"We've been studying the case," she and Jed said at one of the casual student parties which happened to be held this night in Vandaleur's room. "We think we know what's causing it. We're going to do a paper." They were in a high state of excitement.

"Causing what?" somebody wanted to know. -

"The android rampage."

"Obviously out Of adjustment, isn't it? Body chemistry gone haywire. Maybe a kind of synthetic cancer, yes?"

"No." Wanda gave Jed a look of suppressed triumph.

"Well, what is it?"

"Something specific." "What?"

"That would be telling." "Oh, come on."

"Nothing doing."

"Won't you tell us?" I asked intently. "I . . . we're very much interested in what could go wrong with an android."

"No, Mr. Venice," Wanda said. "It's a unique idea and we've got to protect it. One thesis like this and we'll be set up for life. We can't take the chance of somebody stealing it."

"Can't you give us a hint?"

"No. Not a hint. Don't say a word, Jed. But I'll tell you this much, Mr. Venice. I'd hate to be the man who owns that android." -

"You mean the police?" I asked.

"I mean projection, Mr. Venice. Psychotic projection! That's the danger. . . and I won't say any more. I've said too much as is."

I heard steps outside, and a hoarse voice singing softly: "Be fleet be fleet, cool and discreet, honey. .

. . “My android entered the room, home from its tour of duty at the university power plant. It was not introduced. I motioned to it and I immediately responded to the command and went to the beer keg and took over Vandaleur’s job of serving the guests. Its accomplished fingers writhed in a private rumba of their own. Gradually they stopped their squirming, and the strange humming ended.

Androids were not unusual at the university. The wealthier students owned them along with cars and planes. Vandaleur’s ‘android provoked no comment, but young Wanda was sharpeyed and quick-witted. She noted my bruised forehead and she was intent on the history-making, thesis she and Jed Stark were going to write. After the party broke up, she consulted with Jed walking upstairs to her room.

“Jed, why’d that android have a bruised forehead?”

“Probably hurt itself, Wanda. It’s working in the power plant. They fling a lot of heavy stuff around.” “That all?”

“What else?”

“It could be a convenient bruise.”

“Convenient for what?”

“Hiding what’s stamped on its forehead.”

“No point to that, Wanda. You don’t have to see marks on a forehead to recognize an android. You don’t have to see a trademark on a car to know it’s a car.”

“I don’t mean it’s trying to pass as a human. I mean it’s trying to pass as a lower-grade android.” -

“Why?” -

“Suppose it had MA on its forehead.”

“Multiple aptitude? Then why in hell would Venice waste it stoking furnaces if it could earn more— Oh. Oh! You mean it’s—?”

Wanda nodded.

“Jesus!” Stark pursued his lips. “What do we do? Call the police?”

“No. We don’t know if it’s an MA for a fact. If it turns out to be an MA and the killing android, our paper comes first anyway. This is our big chance, Jed. If it’s that android we can run a series of controlled tests and—”

“How do we find out for sure?”

“Easy. Infrared film. That’ll show what’s under the bruise.

Borrow a camera. We’ll sneak down to the power plant tomorrow afternoon and take some pictures. Then we’ll know.”

They stole down into the university power plant the follow

ing afternoon. It was a vast cellar, deep under the earth. It was dark, shadowy, luminous with burning light from the furnace doors. Above the mar of the fires they could hear a- strange voice shouting and chanting in the echoing vault: "All rent! All rent! So jeet your seat. Be fleet be fleet, cool and discreet, honey And they could see a capering figure dancing a lunatic rumba in time to the music it shouted. The legs twisted.

The arms waved. The fingers writhed.

Jed Stark raised the camera and began shooting his spool of infrared film, aiming the camera sights at that bobbing head.

Then Wanda shrieked, for I saw them and came charging down

on them, brandishing a polished steel shovel. It smashed the

camera. It felled the girl and then the boy. Jed fought me for

a desperate hissing moment before he was bludgeoned into helplessness. Then the android dragged them to the furnace and fed them to the flames, slowly, hideously. It capered and sang-. Then it returned to my hotel.

The thermometer in the power plant registered 100.9° mur

- derously Fahrenheit. All reet! All reet!

We bought steerage on the Lyra Queen and Vandaleur and the android did odd jobs for their meals. During the night watches, Vandaleur would sit alone in the steerage head with a cardboard portfolio on his lap, puzzling over its contents. That portfolio was all he had managed to bring with him from Lyra Alpha. He had stolen it from Wanda's room. It was labeled ANDROID. It contained the secret of my sickness. -

And it contained nothing but newspapers. Scores of newspapers from all over the galaxy, printed, microfilmed, en graved, etched, offset, photostated. . . Rigel Star-Banner

Paragon Picayune. . - Megastar Times-Leader. . . Lalande Herald.. . Lacaille Journal. . . Indi Intelligencer. . . Eridani Telegram-News. All rent! All rent!

Nothing but newspapers. Each paper contained an account of one crime in the android's ghastly career. Eath paper also contained news, domestic andforeign, sports, society, weather, shipping news, stock exchange quotations, human-interest stories, features, contests, puzzles. Somewhere in that mass of uncollated facts was the secret Wanda and Jed Stark had discovered. Vandaleur pored over the papers helplessly. It was beyond,him. So jeet your seat!

"I'll sell you," I told the android. "Damn you. When we land on Terra, I'll sell you. I'll settle for three percent of whatever you're worth."

"I am worth fifty-seven thousand dollars on the current exchange," I told him.

"If I can't sell you, I'll turn you in to the police," I said.

"I am valuable property," I answered. "It is forbidden to endanger valuable property. You won't have me destroyed."

"Christ damn you!" Vandaleur cried. "What? Are you arrogant? Do you know you can trust me to protect you? Is that the secret?" -

The multiple-aptitude android regarded him with calm accomplished eyes. "Sometimes," it said, "it is a good thing to be property."

It was three below zero when the Lyra Queen dropped at Croydon Field. A mixture of ice and snow swept across the field, fizzling and exploding into steam under the Queen's tail jets. The passengers trotted numbly across the blackened concrete to customs inspection, and thence to the airport bus that was to take them to London. Vandaleur and the android were

broke. They walked. -

By midnight they reached Piccadilly Circus. The December ice storm had not slackened and the statue of Eros was encrusted with ice. They turned right, walked down to Trafalgar Square and then along the Strand, shaking with cold and wet. Just above Fleet Street, Vandaleur saw a solitary figure coming from the direction of St. Paul's. He drew the android into an alley.

"We've got to have money," he whispered. He pointed to the approaching figure. "He has money. Take it from him."

"The order cannot be obeyed," the android said. -

"Take it from him," Vandaleur repeated. "By force. Do you understand? We're desperate."

"It is contrary to my prime directive," the android repeated. "The order cannot be obeyed."

"Damn you!" I said. "You've murdered. . . tortured

destroyed! You tell me that now?"

"It is forbidden to endanger life or property. The order cannot be obeyed."

I thrust the android back and leaped out at the stranger. He was tall, austere, poised. He had an air of hope curdled by cynicism. He carried a cane. I saw he was blind.

"Yes?" he said. "I hear you near me. What is it?"

"Sir,..." Vandaleur hesitated. "I'm desperate."

"We are all desperate," the stranger replied. "Quietly desperate." -

"Sir. . . I've got to have some money."

“Are you begging or stealing?” The sightless eyes passed over Vandaleur and the android.

“I’m prepared for either.”

“An. So are we all. It is the history of our race.” The stranger motioned over his- shoulder. “I have been begging at St. Paul’s, my friend. What I desire cannot be stolen. What is it you desire that you are lucky enough to be able to steal?” -

“Money,” Vandaleur said.

“Money for what? Come, my friend, let us exchange confidences. I will tell you why I beg, if you will tell me why

you steal. My name is Blenheim.”, “My name is. . . Vole.”

“I was not begging for sight at St. Paul’s, Mr. Vole. I was begging for a number.”

“A number?” -

“An, yes. Numbers rational, numbers irrational. Numbers imaginary. Positive integers. Negative integers. Fractions, positive and negative. Elh? You have never heard of Blenheim’s immortal treatise on Twenty Zeros, or The Differences in Absence of Quantity?” Blenheim smiled bitterly. “I am the wizard of the Theory of Numbers, Mr. Vole, and I have exhausted the charm of Number fOr myself. After fifty years of wizardry, senility approaches and appetite vanishes. I have been praying in St. Paul’s for inspiration. Dear God, I prayed, if You exist, send me a Number.”

Vandaleur slowly lifted the cardboard portfolio, and touched Blenheim’s hand with it.- “In here,” he said, “is a number. A hidden number. A secret number. The number of a crime. Shall we exchange, Mr. Blenheim? Shelter for a number?”

“Neither begging nor stealing, eh?” Blenheim said. “But a bargain. So all life reduces itself to the banal.” The sightless

- eyes again passed over Vandaleur and the android. “Perhaps the Almighty is not God but a merchant. Come home with me.”

On the top floor of Blenheim’s house we share a room— two beds, two clàsets, two washstands, one bathroom. Vandaleur bruised my forehead again and sent me out to find work, and while the android worked, I consulted with Blenheim and read him the papers from the portfolio, one by one. All reet! All reet! -

Vandaleur told him this much and no more. He was a student, I said, planning a thesis on the murdering android. In these papers which he had collected were the facts that would explain the crimes, of which Blenheim had heard nothing.

There must be a correlation, a number, a statistic, something which would account for my derangement, I explained, and Blenheim was piqued by the mystery, the detective story, the human interest of Number.

We examined the papers. As I read theni -loud, he listed

them and their contents in his blind, meticulous -writing-. And

then I read his notes to him. He listed the papers -by type, by

type face, by fact, by fancy, by article, spelling, words, theme, advertising, pictures, subject, politics, prejudices. He analyzed. He studied. He meditated. And we lived together in that top floor, always a little cold, always a little terrified, always a little closer.. . brought together by our fear of us, our hatred

between us driven like a wedge into a living tree and splitting the trunk, only to be forever incorporated into the-scar tissue. So we grew together; Vandaleur and the android. Be fleet be fleet. ‘ -

And one afternoon Blenheim called Vandaleur into his study

and displayed his notes. “I think I’ve found it,” he said, “but I can’t understand it.”

Vandaleur’s heart leaped. - “Here are the correlations,” Blenheim continued. “In fifty

papers there are accounts of the criminal android. What is there,

outside the depredations, that is also in fifty papers?” “I don’t know, Mr. Blenheim.” -

“It was a rhetorical - question. Here is the answer. The weather.” - “What?”

“The weather.” Blenheim nodded. “Each crime was committed on a day when the temperature was above ninety-degrees Fahrenheit.” -

“But that’s impossible,” Vandaleur exclaimed. “It was cold at the university on Lyra Alpha.” -

“We have no record of any crime committed on Lyra Alpha.

There is no paper.”

“No. That’s right. I—” Vandalepr was coiffused. Suddenly he exclaimed. “No. You’re right. The furnace room. It was hot down there. Hot! Of course. My God, yes! That’s the answer. Dallas Brady’s electric furnace. . . the rice deltas on Paragon. So jeet- your seat. Yes. But’ why? Why? My God, why?”

I came into the house at that moment and, passing the study, saw Vandaleur and Blenheim. I entered, awaiting commands, my multiple aptitudes devoted tO service. “That’s the android, eh?” Blenheim said after a long moment.

“Yes,” Vandaleur answered, still confused by the discovery. -

“And that explains why it refused to attack you that night on the Strand. It wasn’t hot enough to break the prime directive.

Only in the-heat.. .The heat, all reet!” He looked at the android. A lunatic command passed from man to android. I refused. It is forbidden to endanger life. Vandaleur gestured furiously, then seized Blenheim’s shoulders and yanked him back out of his desk chairlo the floor. Blenheim shouted once.

Vandaleur leaped on him like a tiger, pinning him to the floor and sealing his mouth with one hand.

“Find a weapon,” I called to the android.

“It is forbidden to endanger life-.”

“This is a fight for self-preservation. Bring me a weapon!”

He held the squirming mathematician with all his weight. I went at once to a cupboard where I knew a revolver was kept. I checked it. It was loaded with five cartridges. I handed it to Vandaleur. I took it, rammed the barrel against Blenheim’s head and pulled the trigger. He shuddered once. -

We had three hours before the cook returned from her day off. We looted the house. We took Blenheim’s money and jewels. We packed a bag with clothes. We took Blenheim’s notes, destroyed the newspapers, and we fled, carefully locking the door behind us. In Blenheim’s study we left a pile of crumpled papers under a half inch of burning candle. And we soaked the rug around it with kerosene. No, I did all that. The android refused. I am forbidden to endanger life or property.

All reet!

They took the tubes to Leicester Square, changed trains and rode to the British Museum. There they got off and went to a small Georgian house just off Russell Square. A shingle in the window read: NAN WEBB, PSYCHOMETRIC CONSUL-TANT. Vandaleur had made a note of the address some weeks earlier. They went into the house. The android waited in the foyer with the bag. Vandaleur entered Nan Webb’s office. -

She was a tall woman with gray shingled hair, very fine English complexion and very bad English legs. Her features were blunt, her expression acute, She nodded to Vandaleur, finished a letter, sealed it and looked up.

“My name,” I said, “is Vanderbilt. James Vanderbilt.”

“Quite.”

“I’m an exchange student at London University.”

“Quite.”

“I’ve been researching on the killer android, and I think

I’ve discovered something very interesting. I’d like your advice

on it. What is your fee?” - “What is your college at the university?”

“Why?”

“There is a discount for students.” -

“Merton College.” -

"That will be two pounds, please." -

Vandaleur placed two pounds on the desk and added to the fee Blenheim's notes. "There is a correlation," he said, "between the crimes of the android and the weather. You will note that each crime was committed when the temperature rose above ninety degrees Fahrenheit. Is there a psychometric answer for this?" . -

Nan Webb nodded, studied the notes for a moment, put down the sheets of paper and said: "Synesthesia, obviously."

"W'hat?"

"Synesthesia," she repeated. "When a sensation, Mr. Vanderbilt, is interpreted immediately in terms of a sensation from a different sense organ than the one stimulated, it is called synesthesia. For example: A sound stimulus gives rise to a simultaneous sensation of definite color. Or color gives rise to a sensation of taste. Or a light stimulus gives rise to a sensation of sound. There can be confusion or short circuiting of any sensation of taste, smell, pain, pressure, temperature -and so on. D'you understand?"

"I think so."

"Your research has probably uncovered the fact that the android most probably reacts to temperature stimulus above the ninety-degree level synesthetically. Most probably there is an endocrine response. Probably a temperature linkage with the android adrenal surrogate. High temperature brings about a response of fear, anger, excitement and violent physical activity. . . all within the province of the adrenal gland."

"Yes. I see. Then if the android were to be kept in cold climates. . . ."

"There would be neither stimulus nor response. There would be no crimes. Quite."

"I see. What is psychotic projection?"

"How do you mean?"

"Is there any danger of projection with regard to the owner of the android?"

"Very interesting. Projection is a throwing forward. It is

the process of throwing out upon another the ideas or impulses that belong to oneself. The paranoid, for example, projects upon others his conflicts and disturbances in order to externalize them. He accuses, directly or by implication, other men of having the very sicknesses with which he is struggling himself."

"And the danger of projection?"

"It is the danger of the victim's believing what is implied. If you live with a psychotic who projects his sickness upon you, there is a danger of falling into his psychotic pattern and becoming virtually psychotic yourself. As, no doubt, is happening to you, Mr. Vandaleur."

Vandaleur leaped to his feet.

"You are an ass," Nan Webb went on crisply. She waved the sheets of notes. "This is no exchange student's writing. It's the unique cursive of the famous Blenheim. Every school in England knows this blind writing. There is no Merton College at London University. That was a miserable guess. Merton is one of the Oxford Colleges. And you, Mr. Vandaleur, are so obviously infected by association with your deranged android. . . by projection, if you will. . . that I hesitate between calling the Metropolitan Police and the Hospital for the Criminally Insane."

I took the gun out and shot her.

Reet!

"Antares Two, Alpha Aurigae, Acrux Four, Pollux Nine, Rigel Centaurus," Vandaleur said. "They're all cold. Cold as a witch's kiss. Mean temperatures of forty degrees Fahrenheit. Never get hotter than seventy. We're in business again. Watch that curve."

The multiple-aptitude android swung the wheel with its accomplished hands. The car took the curve sweetly and sped on through the northern marshes, the reeds stretching for miles, brown and dry, under the cold English sky. The sun was sinking swiftly. Overhead, a lone flight of bustards flapped clumsily eastward. High above the flight, a lone helicopter drifted toward home and warmth.

"No more warmth for us," I said. "No more heat. We're safe when we're cold. We'll hole up in Scotland, make a little money, get across to Norway, build a bankroll and then ship out. We'll settle on Pollux. We're safe. We've licked it. We can live again."

There was a startling bleep from overhead, and then a ragged roar: "ATTENTION JAMES VANDALEUR AND ANDROID. ATTENTION

JAMES VANDALEUR AND ANDROID."

Vandaleur started and looked up. The lone helicopter was floating above them. From its belly came amplified commands:

"YOU ARE SURROUNDED. THE ROAD IS BLOCKED. YOU ARE TO STOP YOUR CAR AT ONCE AND SUBMIT TO ARREST. STOP AT ONCE!"

I looked at Vandaleur for orders.

"Keep driving," Vandaleur snapped.

The helicopter dropped lower "ATTENTION ANDROID. YOU ARE IN CONTROL OF THE VEHICLE. YOU ARE TO STOP AT ONCE. THIS IS A STATE DIRECTIVE SUPERSEDING ALL PRIVATE COMMANDS.!

The car slowed.

"What the hell are you doing?" I shouted.

"A state directive supercedes all private commands," the android answered. "I must point out to you that—"

"Get the hell away from the wheel," Vandaleur ordered. I clubbed the android, yanked him sideways and squirmed Over him to the wheel. The car veered off the road in that moment and went churning through the frozen mud and dry reeds. Vandaleur regained control and continued westward through the marshes toward a parallel highway five miles distant.

"We'll beat their goddamned block," he grunted. The car pounded and surged. The helicopter dropped even lower. A searchlight blazed from the belly of the plane.

"ATTENTION JAMES VANDALEUR AND ANDROID. SUBMIT TO ARREST. THIS IS A STATE DIRECFIVE SUPERSEDING ALL PRiVATE COMMANDS." -

"He can't submit," Vandaleur shouted wildly. "Them's no one to submit to. He can't and I won't."

"Christ!" I muttered. "We'll beat them yet. We'll beat the block. We'll beat the heat. We'll—"

"I must point out to you," I said, "that I am required by my prime directive to obey state directives which supersede all private commands. I must submit to arrest."

"Who says it's a state directive?" Vandaleur said. "Them? Up in that plane? They've got to show credentials. They've got to prove it's state authority before you submit. How d'you know they're not crooks trying to trick us?"

Holding the wheel with one arm, he reached into his side pocket to make sure the gun was still in place. The car skidded.

The tires squealed on frost and reeds. The wheel was wrenched from his grasp and the car yawed up a small hillock and overturned. The motor roared and the wheels screamed. Vandaleur crawled out and dragged the android with him. For the moment

we were outside the cone of light blazing down from the helicopter. We blundered off into the marsh, into the blackness; into concealment. . . Vandaleur running with a pounding heart, hauling the android along.

The helicopter circled and soared over the wrecked car, searchlight peering, loudspeaker braying. On the highway we had left, lights appeared as the pursuing and blocking parties gathered and followed radio directions from the plane. Vandaleur and the android continued deeper and deeper into the marsh, working their way towards the parallel road and safety. It was night by now. The sky was a black matte. Not a star showed. The temperature was dropping. A southeast night wind knifed us to the bone. -

Far behind there was a dull concussion. Vandaleur turned, gasping. The car's fuel had exploded. A geyser of flame shot up like a lurid fountain. It subsided into a low crater of burning reeds. Whipped by the wind, the distant hem of flame fanned up into- a wall, ten feet high. The wall began marching down on us, crackling fiercely. Above it, a pall of oily smoke surged forward. Behind it, Vandaleur could make out the figures of men.. a mass of beaters searching the marsh.

"Christ!" I cried and searched desperately for safety. He ran, dragging me with him, until their feet crunched through the surface ice of a pool. He trampled the ice furiously, then flung himself down in the numbing water, pulling the android with us.

The wall of flame approached. I could hear the crackle and feel the heat. He could see the searchers clearly. Vandaleur reached into his side pocket for the gun. The pocket was torn. The gun was gone. He groaned and shook with cold and terror.

The light from the marsh fire was blinding. Overhead, the helicopter floated helplessly to one side, unable to fly through the smoke and flames and aid the searchers, who were beating far to the right of us.

"They'll miss us," Vandaleur whispered. "Keep quiet. That's an order. They'll miss us. We'll beat them. We'll beat the fire. We'll—"

Three distinct shots sounded less than a hundred feet from the fugitives. Blam! Blam! Blam! They came from the last three cartridges in my gun as the marsh fire reached it where it had

dropped, and exploded the shells. The searchers turned toward the sound and began working directly toward us. Vandaleur cursed hysterically and tried to submerge even deeper to escape

the intolerable heat of the fire. The android began to twitch.

The wall of flame surged up to them. Vandaleur took a deep breath and prepared to submerge until the flame passed over them. The android shuddered and suddenly began to scream.

"All reet! All met!" it shouted. "Be fleet be fleet!"

"Damn you!" I shouted. I tried to drown the android.

"Damn you!" I cursed. I smashed Vandaleur's face.

The android battered Vandaleur, who fought it off until it burst out of the mud and staggered upright. Before I could

return to the attack, the live flames captured it hypnotically. It danced and capered in a lunatic rumba before the wall of fire.

Its legs twisted. Its arms waved. The fingers writhed in a private

rumba of their own. It shrieked and sang and ran in a crooked waltz before the embrace of the heat, a muddy monster silhouetted against the brilliant sparkling flare.

The searchers shouted. There were shots. The android spun around twice and then continued its horrid dance before the face of the flames. There was a rising gust of wind. The fire swept around the capering figure and enveloped it for a roaring moment. Then the fire swept on, leaving behind it a sobbing mass of synthetic flesh oozing scarlet blood that would never coagulate.

The thermometer would have registered 1200° wondrously Fahrenheit.

Vandaleur didn't die. I got away. They missed him while they watched the android caper and die. But I don't know which of us he is these days. Psychotic projection, Wanda warned me. Projection, Nan Webb told him. If you live with a crazy machine long enough, I become crazy too. Reet!

But we know the truth. We know that they were wrong. It was the other way around. It was the man that was corrupting the machine... . any machine... . all machines. The new robot and Vandaleur know that because the new robot's started twitching too. Reet!

- Here on cold Pollux, the robot is twitching and singing. No heat, but my fingers writhe. No heat, but it's taken the little Talley girl off for a solitary walk. A cheap labor robot. . . A servo-mechanism. . . all I could afford.. . but it's twitching and humming and walking alone with the child somewhere and I can't find them. Christ! Vandaleur can't find me before it's too late. Cool and discreet, honey, in the dancing frost while the thermometer registers 10° fondly Fahrenheit.