



THE INSPECTOR'S TEETH

A.D. 2054-2088

WORLD MANAGER CHAGAS sat waiting for the Osirian ambassador, mentally practicing the brisk handshake and the glassy smile. Across the conference table the First Assistant to the Manager, \Vu, chainsmoked, while the Minister of External Affairs, Evans, filed his nails. Although the faint rasp annoyed Chagas, he gave no sign, imperturbability being one of the qualities for which he was paid. The indirect lighting threw soft highlights from the silver skulicaps covering the shaven crania of the three.

Chagas said: "I shall be glad when I can let my hair grow again like a civilized man."

"My dear Chagas," said Wu, "with the hair you have, I don't see what difference it makes."

Evans put away his nail file and said: "Gentlemen, when I was a kid a century ago, I wondered what it would be like to be on the inside of a great historical moment. Now I'm in on one, I find it queer I'm the same old Jefferson Evans, and not Napoleon or Caesar." He looked at his nails. "Wish we knew more Osirian psychology . .

Wu said: "Don't start that Neo-Paretan nonsense again about Osirians being guided by sentiments, so we need only know which one to play on, like pressing a button. Osirians are rational people; would have to be to invent space travel independently of us. Therefore will be guided by their economic interests alone."

"Neo-Marxist tapioca!" snapped Evans. "Sure, they're rational, but also sentimental and capricious like us. There's no contradiction--"

"But there is!" said Wu excitedly. "Environment makes the man, and not the contrary."

"Do not start that, I beg," said Chagas. "This ~s too important to get your systems full of adrenalin over theory. Thank God I am a plain man who tries to do his duty and does not worry about sociological theories. If he takes our terms, the Althing will ratify the treaty and we shall have an Interplanetary Council to keep peace. If he insists on the terms we privately think he is entitled to, the Althing will not ratify. Then we shall have separate sovereignties, and it will be the history of our poor Earth all over again."

"You borrow trouble, chief," said Wu. "There are no serious disputes between our system and the Procyonic. Even if there were, there is no economic advantage to a war at such distance, even though Osirians have capitalistic economy like Evans's country . .

"Who said wars are always fought for economic advantage?" said Evans. "Ever hear of the Crusades? Or the war that was fought over one pig?"

Wu said: "You mean the war some sentimental historian without grasp of social and economic factors thought was fought for pig--"

"Stop it!" said Chagas.



"Okay," said Evans. "But I'll bet you a drink, Wu, that the Osirian takes our offer as it stands."

"You are on," said Wu.

A bell chimed, bringing the men to their feet.

As the Osirian came in, they advanced with outstretched hands, uttering polite platitudes. The Osirian set down his bulging briefcase and shook their hands. He looked like a small dinosaur, a head taller than a man—one of the little ones that ran about on its hind legs with its tail stuck out behind to balance. A complex pattern of red-and-gold paint decorated his scales.

The Osirian took the backless chair that had been provided for him. "A kreat pleashure, chentlemen," he said slowly in an accent they could barely understand. This was natural, considering the difference between his vocal organs and theirs. "I haff stuttiet the offer of the Worlt Fetteration and reached my tecishion."

Chagas gave him a meaningless diplomatic smile. "Well, sir?"

The ambassador, whose face was not built for smiles, flicked his forked tongue out and back. With irritating deliberation he began ticking off points on his claws:

"On one hant, I know political conditions in the Solar System and on Earth in particular. Hence I know why you hat to ask me the things you dit. On the other, my people will not like some of these things. They will consitter many of your demants unchust. I could go ofer the grounds of opchection one py one. Howeffor, since you airetty know these opchections, I can make my point better py tellink you a little story."

Wu and Evans exchanged a quick glance of impatience.

The forked tongue flicked out again. "This is a true story, of the old tays when the mesonic drive had first enapled you to fly to other stars and put your system in touch with ours. Pefore there was talk apout galactic government, and pefore you learnt to guart akainst our little hypnotic powers with those pretty silfer hats. When a younk Sha'akhfa, or as you say an Osirian, hat come to your Earth to seek wistom. .

"When Herbert Lengyel, a junior, proposed that they bid Hithafea, the Osirian freshman, the Iota Gamma Omicron's council was thrown into turmoil. Herb persisted, glasses flashing:

"He's got everything! He's got money, and he's smart and good-natured, and good company, and full of college spirit. Look how he got elected yell-leader when he'd been here only a few weeks! Of course it would be easier if he looked less like a fugitive from the reptile house in the zoo, but we're civilized people and should judge by the personality inside—"

"Just a minute!" John Fitzgerald, being a three-letter man and a senior, threw much weight in the council. "We got too many queer types in this fraternity already."

He looked hard at Lengyel, though Herb, who would like to have punched his handsome face, was merely a sober and serious student instead of a rah-rah boy. Fitzgerald went on:

"Who wants the lotas to be a haven for all the campus freaks? Next thing



you'll find a thing like a bug, a praying mantis a couple of meters high sitting in your chair, and you'll be told that's the new pledge from Mars-

"Ridiculous!" interrupted Lengyel. "Martians can't stand Earthly gravity and humidity for long-

"That's not the point. I was speaking generally, and for my money a young dinosaur's not much improvement on a Martian-

"Another thing," said Lengyel. "\Ve have an antidiscrimination clause in our charter. So we can't bar this man-this student, I should say-

"Oh yes we can," said Fitzgerald, stifling a yawn. "That refers only to the races of mankind; it don't apply to nonhuman beings. We're still a club of gentlemen-get that, gentle-men-and Hithafea sure ain't no man."

"Principle's the same," said Lengyel. "WIhy d'you think Atlantic's one of the few universities left with fraternities? Because the frats here have upheld the democratic tradition and avoided snobbery and discrimination. Now-

"Nuts!" said Fitzgerald. "It isn't discriminatory to pick folks you think will be congenial. It wouldn't be so bad if Herb had merely proposed some guy from Krishna, where they look more or less human-

"There aren't any Krishnans at Atlantic this year," muttered Lengyel.

"-but no, he has to foist a shuddery scaly reptile-

"John's got a phobia against snakes," said Lengyel.

"So does every normal person-

"Nuts to you, Brother Fitzgerald. It's merely a neurosis, implanted by-

"You're both getting away from the subject," said Brother Brown, president of the chapter.

They went on like that for some time until a vote was called for. Since Fitzgerald blackballed Hithafea, Lengyel blackballed Fitzgerald's young brother.

"Hey!" cried Fitzgerald. "You can't do that!"

"Says who?" said Lengyel. "I just don't like the young lout."

After further wrangling, each withdrew his veto against the other's protege.

On his way out, Fitzgerald punched Lengyel in the solar plexus with a thumb the size of a broomstick end and said: "You're taking Alice to the game tomorrow for me, see? And be sure you give her back in the same condition as you got her!"

"Okay, Stinker," said Lengyel, and went to his room to study. Although they did not like each other, they managed to get along. Lengyel secretly admired Fitzgerald for being the perfect movie idea of Joe College, while Fitzgerald secretly envied Lengyel's brains. It amused Fitzgerald to turn over his coed to Lengyel because he regarded Herb as a harmless gloop who wouldn't dare try to make time with her himself.

Next day, the last Saturday of the 2054 football season, Atlantic played Yale on the home field. Herb Lengyel led Alice Hoim into the stands. As usual, when he got near her his tongue got glued to the roof of his mouth. So he studied the pink card he found thumbtacked to the back of the bleacher seat in front of him. On this were listed, by number, the things he was supposed to do with a big square of cardboard, orange on one side and black on the other, when the



cheerleader gave the command, in order to present a letter, number, or picture to the opposite side of the stadium.

He finally said: "D'I tell you we decided to bid Hithafea? Speak it not in Gath, though; it's confidential."

"I won't," said Alice, looking very blonde and lovely. "Does that mean that when John takes me to your dances Hithafea will ask to dance with me?"

"Not if you don't want him to. I don't know if he dances."

"I'll try not to shudder. Are you sure he didn't use his mysterious hypnotic powers to make you propose him?"

"Fooley! Professor Kantor in psych says all this talk about the hypnotic powers of the Osirians is bunk. If a man's a naturally good hypnotic subject he'll be hypnotizable, otherwise not. There aren't any mysterious rays the Osirians shoot from their eyes."

"Well," said Alice, "Professor Peterson doesn't agree. He thinks there's something to it, even though nobody has been able to figure out how it works- Oh, here they come. Hithafea makes a divine yell-leader, doesn't he?"

Although the adjective was perhaps not well chosen, the sight of Hithafea, flanked by three pretty coeds on each side, and prancing and waving his megaphone, was certainly unforgettable. It was made even more so by the fact that he was wearing an orange sweater with a big black A on the chest and a freshman beanie on his head. His locomotive-whistle voice rose above the general uproar:

"Atlan tic! A-T-L-A-N . . ."

At the end of each yell Hithafea flung out his arms with talons spread and leaped three meters into the air on his birdlike legs. He got much more kick out of the rooters' reaction to his yell-leading than the players did, since they were busy playing football. Hithafea himself had had hopes of going out for intercollegiate athletics, preferably track, until the coach had broken it to him as gently as possible that nobody would compete against a being who could broad jump twelve meters without drawing a deep breath.

As both teams were strong that year, the score at the end of the first quarter still stood o-o. Yale completed a pass and it looked as if the receiver were in the clear until John Fitzgerald, the biggest of the fourteen right tackles of the Atlantic varsity, nailed him. Hithafea screamed:

"Fitzcheralt! Rah, rah, rah, Fitzcheralt!"

A drunken Yale senior, returning to his seat after visiting the gentlemen's room under the stands, got turned around and showed up on the grass strip in front of the Atlantic side of the stadium. There he tramped up and down and bumped into people and fell over the chairs of the Atlantic band and made a general nuisance of himself.

At last Hithafea, observing that everybody else was too much interested in the game to abate this nuisance, caught the man by the shoulder and turned him around. The man looked up at Hithafea and shrieked: "I got 'em! I got 'em!" and tried to break away.

He might as well have saved his trouble. The Sha'akhfi freshman held him firmly by both shoulders and hissed something at him. Then he let him go.

Instead of running away, the man threw off his hat with its little blue



feather, his furry overcoat, his coat and vest and shirt and pants. Despite the cold he ran out onto the field in his underwear, hugging his bottle under one arm and pretending it was a football.

Before he was finally taken away, the man had caused Yale to be penalized for having twelve men on the field during a play. Luckily the Yale rooters were too far away on the other side of the stadium to understand what was happening, or there might have been a riot. As it was, they were pretty indignant when they found out later, feeling that somebody had pulled a fast one on them. Especially as the game ended 21-20 favor of Atlantic.

After the game Hithafea went to his mailbox in the Administration Building. All the other frosh were eagerly pushing around the pigeonholes to get theirs, for this was the day when fraternity bids were distributed. When Hithafea softly hissed: "Excuse me, please," they made plenty of room for him.

He took three little white envelopes from his box and scooted for his room in the freshman dorm. He burst in to find his roommate, Frank Hodiak, studying his one bid. Hithafea sat down on his bed with his tail curling up against the wall and opened his envelopes, slitting them neatly along the edge with his claws.

"Frank!" he cried. "They want me!"

"Hey," said Hodiak, "what's the matter with you? You're drooling on the rug! Are you sick?"

"No, I am cryink."

"What?"

"Sure. That is the way we Sha'akhfi cry."

"And why are you crying?"

"Pecause I am so happy! I am ofercome with emotion!"

"Well for goodness' sake," said Hodiak unfeelingly, "go cry in the sink, then. I see you got three. Which you gonna take?"

"I think the Iota Gamma Omicrons."

"Why? Some of the others got more prestige."

"I do not care. I am takink them anyway, for sentimental reasons."

"Don't tell me a cold-blooded reptile like you is sentimental!"

"Sure. All we Sha'akhfi are. You think we are not because we do not show our feelinks in our faces."

"Well," persisted Hodiak, "what are these sentimental reasons, huh?"

"First," (Hithafea counted on his claws) "pecause Herp Lengyel iss one. He was the first man on the campus to treat me like a fellow beirik. Second, pecause the kreat de Câmara was an Iota when he attendet Atlantic many years ako."

"Who's this guy de C~mara?"

"Dit you neffer know? My, some of you echucated Earthmen are iknorant of your own history! He was one of the great space-pioneers, the founter of the Viagens Interplanetarias, and the first Earthman to set foot on Osiris."

"Oh. Another Brazzy, eh?"

"Yes. It wass de Câmara who prought the false teeth of our Chief Inspector Ficèsaqha back to Earth from Osiris, and gafe them to Atlantic when they presented him with an honorary degree. Pefore I leat yells at a game, I go up to the museum and gaze upon those teeth. Their sentimental associations inspire



me. I am fery sentimental apout Senhor de Câmara, although some of our people claim he stole those teeth and other thinks as well when he left our planet."

At the first pledge meeting, Hithafea squatted down humbly among his fellow pledges, who looked at him with traces of distaste or apprehension. When the prospective members' duties had been explained to them, Fitzgerald and a couple of the other brothers undertook to have a little fun of the sadistic sort associated with initiations. They brought out a couple of wooden paddles, like ping-pong racquets but heavier, and fired nonsensical questions at the freshmen. Those who failed to answer glibly were paddled for ignorance, whereas those who answered glibly were paddled for being fresh.

By and by Hithafea said: "Will nopody pattle me?"

"Why, Monster?" said Fitzgerald. "D'you wanna be?"

"Of course! It is part of peink a pletch. It would preak my heart if I were not pattled the same as the others."

The brothers looked at each other with expressions of bafflement. Brother Brown, indicating Hithafea's streamlined stern, asked:

"How the hell can we? I mean, where's his-uh-I mean, where shall we hit him?"

"Oh, anywhere!" said Hithafea.

Brother Brown, looking a bit unhappy about the whole thing, hauled off with his paddle and whacked Hithafea's scaly haunch. He hit again and again, until Hithafea said:

"I do not efen feel it. Are you sure you are not goink easy on me on purpose? It would wound my feelinks if you dit."

Brown shook his head. "Might as well shoot an elephant with a peashooter. You try, John."

Fitzgerald swung his massive arm and dealt Hithafea a swat that broke the paddle. He wrung his hand, looked at the other brothers, and said:

"Guess we'll have to consider you constructively paddled, Hithafea. Let's get on to business."

The other pledges grinned, evidently glad to escape any further beating. As the brothers had been made to feel a little foolish, the fun seemed to have gone out of paddling for the time being. The brothers sternly commanded the pledges to show up at the house the following night for the Thanksgiving dance, to do the serving and messwork. Moreover they were told to bring three cats each to the next pledge meeting the following week.

Hithafea as usual showed up an hour early for his duties at the dance, wearing a black bow tie around his scaly neck in deference to the formality of the occasion. John Fitzgerald, of course, brought Alice Holm, while Herbert Lengyel came stag and hovered uneasily, trying by an air of bored superiority to mask the fact that he would have liked to bring her himself.

When Hithafea stalked in bearing a fray of refreshments, some of the girls, who were not Atlantic coeds and so had never seen him before, shrieked. Alice, mastering her initial revulsion, said:

"Are you dancing, Hithafea?"

Hithafea said: "Alas, Miss Holm, I could not!"



"Oh, I bet you dance divinely!"

"It is not that. At home on Osiris I perform the fertility tance with the pest of them. Put look at my tail! I should fleet the whole floor to myself, I fear. You have no idea how much trouple a tail is in a worlt where peinks do not normally have them. Every time! try to go through a swingink door-"

"Let's dance, Alice," said Fitzgerald abruptly. "And you, Monster, get to work!"

Alice said: "Why John, I think you're jealous of poor Hithafea! I found him sweet!"

"Me jealous of a slithery reptile? Ha!" sneered Fitzgerald as they spun away in the gymnastic measures of the Zulu.

At the next pledge meeting a great yowling arose when the pledges showed up with three cats apiece, for which they had raided alleys and their friends' houses and the city pound. Brother Brown said:

"Where's Hithafea? The Monster's not usually late-"

The doorbell rang. When one of the pledges opened it he looked out, then leaped back with the alacrity if not the grace of a startled fawn, meanwhile making a froglike noise in his throat. There on the doorstep stood Hithafea with a full-grown lioness on a leash. The cats frantically raced off to other parts of the fraternity house or climbed curtains and mantelpieces. The brothers looked as if they would have done likewise if they had not been afraid of losing face before the pledges.

"Coot evenink," said Hithafea. "This is Tootsie. I rented her. I thought if I prought one cat bik enough it would do for the three I was tolt to pring. You like her, I trust?"

"A character," said Fitzgerald. "Not only a monster, but a character."

"Do I get pattled?" said Hithafea hopefully.

"Paddling you," said Fitzgerald, "is like beating a rhinoceros with a flyswatter." And he set to work with a little extra vim on the fundamentals of the other pledges.

When the pledge meeting was over, the brothers went into conference. Brother Broderick said: "I think we'll have~to give 'em something more original to do for next time. Specially Hithafea here. S'pose we tell him to bring-ah-how about that set of false teeth belonging to that guy-that emperor or whatever he was of Osiris, in the museum?"

Hithafea said: "You mean the teeth of our great Chief Inspector, Ficèsaqha?"

"Yeah, Inspector Fish-well, you pronounce it, but that's what I mean."

"That will be a kreat honor," said Hithafea. "Pefore we go, Mr. Fitzcherald, may I speak to you alone for a moment?"

Fitzgerald frowned and said: "Okay, Monster, but hurry it up. I got a date." He followed the Sha'akhfa out, and the other brothers heard Hithafea hissing something to him in the corridor.

Then Hithafea stuck his head in the doorway and said: "Mr. Lengyel, may I speak to you too, now?" And the same thing happened to Lengyel.

The other brothers did not listen to the conversation between Lengyel and Hithafea because they were more interested in what was happening in the parlor.



John Fitzgerald came through, all slicked up in his best clothes, and the lioness tackled him and tried to wrestle with him. The more he tried to get away the more vigorously she wrestled. He finally gave up and lay on his back while Tootsie sat on his chest and licked his face. As having your face licked by a lion is something like having it gone over with coarse sandpaper, Fitzgerald was somewhat the worse for wear by the time Hithafea came back into the room and pulled his pet off.

"I am fery sorry," he told them. "She is playful."

The night before the next pledge meeting, shadows moved in the shrubbery around the museum. The front door opened and a shadow came out—unmistakably that of a big, broad-shouldered man. The shadow looked about, then back into the darkness whence it had come. Sounds came from the darkness. The shadow trotted swiftly down the front steps and whispered: "Here!"

Another shadow rose from among the shrubs; not that of a man, but of something out of the Mesozoic. The human shadow tossed a package to the reptilian shadow just as the museum's watchman appeared in the doorway and shouted:

"Hey, you!"

The human shadow ran like the wind, while the reptilian shadow faded into the bushes. The watchman yelled again, blew on a police whistle, and ran after the human shadow, but gave up, puffing, after a while. The quarry had disappeared.

"Be goddamned," muttered the watchman. "Cotta get the cops on this one. Let's see, wh' came in late this afternoon, just before closing? There was that little Italian-looking girl, and that red-haired professor, and that big football-type guy."

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Frank Hodiak found his roommate packing his few simple belongings, and asked:

"\Where you going?"

"I am gettink retty to leave for the Christmas vacation," said Hithafea. "I got permission to leafe a few tays aheat of the rest." He shut his small suitcase with a snap and said: "Goot-pye, Frank. It is nice to have known you,"

"Good~bye? Are you going right now?"

"Yes."

"You sound as if you weren't coming back!"

"Perhaps. Some tav. Sahacikhthasèf, as we say on Osiris."

Hodiak said: "Say, what's that funny-looking package you put in

But before he finished, Flithafea was gone.

\When the next pledge meeting was called, Hithafea, hitherto the outstanding eager beaver among the pledges, was absent. They called the dormitory and got in touch with Frank Hodiak, who said that Hithafea had shoved off hours previously.

The other curious fact was that John Fitzgerald had his right wrist bandaged. When the brothers asked him why, he said:

"Damn'f I know. I just found myself in my room with a cut on mv wrist,



and no idea how it got there."

The meeting was well underway and the paddles were descending, when the doorbell rang. Two men came in: one of the campus cops and a regular municipal policeman.

The former said: "Is John Fitzgerald here?"

"Yeah," said Fitzgerald. "I'm him."

"Get ~our hat and coat and come with us."

"\Vhaffor?"

wanna ask you a few questions about the disappearance of an exhibit from the museum."

"I don't know anything about it. Run along and peddle your papers."

That was the wrong line to take, because the city cop brought out a piece of paper with a lot of fancy printing on it and said: "Okay, here's a warrant. You're pinched. Come-" and he took Fitzgerald by the arm.

Fitzgerald cut loose with a swing that ended, splush, on the cop's face, so that the policeman fell down on his back and lay there, moving a little and moaning. The other brothers got excited and seized both cops and threw them out the front door and bumpety-bump down the stone steps of the fraternity house. Then they went back to their pledge meeting.

In five minutes four radio patrol cars stopped in front of the frathouse and a dozen cops rushed in.

The brothers, so belligerent a few minutes before, got out of the way at the sight of the clubs and blackjacks. Hands reached out of blue-clad sleeves toward Fitzgerald. He hit another cop and knocked him down, and then the hands fastened onto all his limbs and held him fast. When he persisted in struggling, a cop hit him on the head with a blackjack and he stopped.

When he came to and calmed down, on the way to the police station, he asked: "What the hell is this all about? I tell you, I never stole nothing from a museum in my whole life!"

"Oh yes you did," said a cop. "It was the false teeth of one of them things from another planet. O'Riley, I think they call it. You was seen going into the museum around closing time, and you left your fingerprints all over the glass case when you busted it. Boy, this time we'll sure throw the book at you! Damn college kids, think they're better than other folks. . .

Next day Herbert Lengyel got a letter:

Dear Herb:

When you read this I shall be enroute to Osiris with the teeth of Chief Inspector Ficèsaqha, one of our greatest heroes. I managed to get a berth on a ship leaving for Pluto, whence I shall proceed to my own system on an Osirian interstellar liner.

When Fitzgerald suggested I steal the teeth, the temptation to recover this relic, originally stolen by de Câmara, was irresistible. Not being an experienced burglar, I hypnotized Fitzgerald into doing the deed for me. Thus I killed three birds with one stone, as you Earthmen say. I got the teeth; I got even with Fitzgerald for his insults; and I got him in



Dutch to give you a clear field with Miss HoIrn.

I tell you this so you can save him from being expelled, as I do not think he deserves so harsh a penalty. I also gave you the Osirian hypnosis to remove some of your inhibitions, so you shall be able to handle your end of the project.

I regret not having finished my course at Atlantic and not being finally initiated into Iota Gamma Omicron. However, my people will honor me for this deed, as we admire the refined sentiments.

Fraternally,
Hithafea

Lengyel put the letter away and looked at himself in the mirror. He now understood why he had felt so light, daring, and selfconfident the last few hours. Not like his old self at all. He grinned, brushed back his hair, and started for the house phone to call Alice.

"So, chentlemen," said Hithafea, "now you unterstant why I have decidet to sign your agreement as it stants. I shall perhaps be criticized for giffink in to you too easily. But you see, I am soft-heartet apout your planet. I have been on many planets, and nowhere have I peen taken in and mate to feel at home as I was py the Iota Gamma Omicron fraternity many years ago."

The ambassador began to gather up his papers. "Have you a memorandum of this meetink for me to initial? Coot." Hithafea signed, using his claw for a pen. "Then we can have a formal signink next week, eh? With cameras and speeches? Some thy if you feel like erecting a monument to the founders of the Interplanetary Council, you might erect it to Mr. Herbert Lengyel."

Evans said: "Sir, I'm told you Osirians like our Earthly alcoholic drinks. Would you care to step down to the Federation bar. . . ."

"I am so sorry, not this time. Next time, yes. Now I must catch an airplane to Baltimore, U.S.A."

"What are you doing there?" said Chagas.

"Why, Atlantic University is giving me an honorary degree. How I shall balance one of those funny hats with the tassel on my crest I do not yet know. But that was another reason I agreeet to your terms.

You see, we are a sentimental race. What is the matter with Mr. Wu? He looks sick."

Chagas said: "He has been watching his lifelong philosophy crumble to bits, that is all. Come, we will see you to your aircraft."

As Wu pulled himself together and rose with the rest, Evans grinned wryly at him, saying:

"After we've dropped the ambassador, I think I'll make it a champagne cocktail!"