



Isaac Asimov -

## Anniversary

The annual ritual was all set.

It was the turn of Moore's house this year, of course, and Mrs. Moore and the children had resignedly gone to her mother's for the

Warren Moore surveyed the room with a faint smile. Only Mark Brandon's enthusiasm kept it going at the first, but he himself had come to like this mild remembrance. It came with age, he supposed; twenty additional years of it. He had grown paunchy, thin-haired, soft-jowled, and-worst of all-sentimental.

So all the windows were polarized into complete darkness and the drapes were drawn. Only occasional stipples of wall were illuminated, thus celebrating the poor lighting and the terrible isolation of that day of wreckage long ago.

There were spaceship rations in sticks and tubes on the table and, of course, in the center an unopened bottle of sparkling green Jabra water, the potent brew that only the chemical activity of Martian fungi could supply.

Moore looked at his watch. Brandon would be here soon; he was never late for this occasion. The only thing that disturbed him was the memory of Brandon's voice on the tube: "Warren, I have a surprise for you this time. Wait and see. Wait and see."

Brandon, it always seemed to Moore, aged little. The younger man had kept his slimness, and the intensity with which he greeted all in life, to the verge of his fortieth birthday. He retained the ability to be in high excitement over the good and in deep despair over the bad. His hair was going gray, but except for that, when Brandon walked up and down, talking rapidly at the top of his voice about anything at all, Moore didn't even have to close his eyes to see the panicked youngster on the wreck of the Silver Queen.

The door signal sounded and Moore kicked the release without turning around. "Come, Mark."

It was a strange voice that answered, though; softly, tentatively, "Mr. Moore?"

Moore turned quickly. Brandon was there, to be sure, but only in the background, grinning with excitement. Someone else was standing before him; short, squat, quite bald, nut-brown and with the feel of space about him.

Moore said wonderingly, "Mike Shea-Mike Shea, by all space."

They pounded hands together, laughing.

Brandon said, "He got in touch with me through the office. He remembered I was with Atomic Products-"

"It's been years," said Moore. "Let's see, you were on Earth twelve years ago-"

"He's never been here on an anniversary," said Brandon. "How about that? He's retiring now. Getting out of space to a place he's buying in Arizona. He came to say hello before he left-stopped off at the city just for that-and I was sure he came for the anniversary. 'What anniversary?' says the old jerk."

Shea nodded, grinning. "He said you made a kind of celebration out of it every year."



"You bet," said Brandon enthusiastically, "and this will be the first one with all three of us here, the first real anniversary. It's twenty years, Mike; twenty years since Warren scrambled over what was left of the wreck and brought us down to Vesta."

Shea looked about. "Space ration, eh? That's old home week to me. And Jabra. Oh, sure, I remember . . . twenty years. I never give it a thought and now, all of a sudden, it's yesterday. Remember when we got back to Earth finally?"

"Do I!" said Brandon. "The parades, the speeches. Warren was the only real hero of the occasion and we kept saying so, and they kept paying no attention. Remember?"

"Oh, well," said Moore. "We were the first three men ever to survive a spaceship crash. We were unusual and anything unusual is worth a celebration. These things are irrational."

"Hey," said Shea, "any of you remember the songs they wrote? That marching one? 'You can sing of routes through Space and the weary maddened pace of the-'"

Brandon joined in with his clear tenor and even Moore added his voice to the chorus so that the last line was loud enough to shake the drapes. "On the wreck of the Silver Que-e-en," they roared out, and ended laughing wildly.

Brandon said, "Let's open the Jabra for the first little sip. This one bottle has to last all of us all night."

Moore said, "Mark insists on complete authenticity. I'm surprised he doesn't expect me to climb out the window and human-fly my way around the building."

"Well, now, that's an idea," said Brandon.

"Remember the last toast we made?" Shea held his empty glass before him and intoned, "Gentlemen, I give you the year's supply of good old H<sub>2</sub>O we used to have." Three drunken bums when we landed. Well, we were kids. I was thirty and I thought I was old. And now," his voice was suddenly wistful, "they've retired me."

"Drink!" said Brandon. "Today you're thirty again, and we remember the day on the Silver Queen even if no one else does. Dirty, fickle public."

Moore laughed. "What do you expect? A national holiday every year with space ration and Jabra the ritual food and drink?"

"Listen, we're still the only men ever to survive a spaceship crash and now look at us. We're in oblivion."

"It's pretty good oblivion. We had a good time to begin with and the publicity gave us a healthy boost up the ladder. We are doing well, Mark. And so would Mike Shea be if he hadn't wanted to return to space."

Shea grinned and shrugged his shoulder. "That's where I like to be. I'm not sorry, either. What with the insurance compensation I got, I have a nice piece of cash now to retire on."

Brandon said reminiscently, "The wreck set back Trans-space Insurance a real packet. Just the same, there's still something missing. You say 'Silver Queen' to anyone these days and he can only think of Quentin, if he can think of anyone."

"Who?" said Shea.



"Quentin. Dr. Horace Quentin. He was one of the non-survivors on the ship. You say to anyone, 'What about the three men who survived?' and they'll just stare at you. 'Huh?' they'll say."

Moore said calmly, "Come, Mark, face it. Dr. Quentin was one of the world's great scientists and we three are just three of the world's nothings."

"We survived. We're still the only men on record to survive."

"So? Look, John Hester was on the ship, and he was an important scientist too. Not in Quentin's league, but important. As a matter of fact, I was next to him at the last dinner before the rock hit us. Well, just because Quentin died in the same wreck, Hester's death was drowned out. No one ever remembers Hester died on the Silver Queen. They only remember Quentin. We may be forgotten too, but at least we're alive."

"I tell you what," said Brandon after a period of silence during which Moore's rationale had obviously failed to take, "we're marooned again. Twenty years ago today, we were marooned off Vesta. Today, we're marooned in oblivion. Now here are the three of us back together again at last, and what happened before can happen again. Twenty years ago, Warren pulled us down to Vesta. Now let's solve this new problem."

"Wipe out the oblivion, you mean?" said Moore. "Make ourselves famous?"

"Sure. Why not? Do you know of any better way of celebrating a twentieth anniversary?"

"No, but I'd be interested to know where you expect to start. I don't think people remember the Silver Queen at all, except for Quentin, so you'll have to think of some way of bringing the wreck back to mind. That's just to begin with."

Shea stirred uneasily and a thoughtful expression crossed his blunt countenance. "Some people remember the Silver Queen. The insurance company does, and you know that's a funny thing, now that you bring up the matter. I was on Vesta about ten-eleven years ago, and I asked if the piece of wreck we brought down was still there and they said sure, who would cart it away? So I thought I'd take a look at it and shot over by reaction motor strapped to my back. With Vestan gravity, you know, a reaction motor is all you need. Anyway, I didn't get to see it except from a distance. It was circled off by force field."

Brandon's eyebrows went sky-high. "Our Silver Queen? For what reason?"

"I went back and asked how come? They didn't tell me and they said they didn't know I was going there. They said it belonged to the insurance company."

Moore nodded. "Surely. They took over when they paid off. I signed a release, giving up my salvage rights when I accepted the compensation check. You did too, I'm sure."

Brandon said, "But why the force field? Why all the privacy?"

"I don't know."

"The wreck isn't worth anything even as scrap metal. It would cost too much to transport it."

Shea said, "That's right. Funny thing, though; they were bringing pieces back from space. There was a pile of it there. I could see it and it looked like just junk, twisted pieces of frame, you know. I asked about it and they said ships were always landing and unloading more scrap, and the insurance company had a standard price for any piece of the Silver Queen brought back, so ships in the neighborhood of Vesta were always looking. Then, on my last voyage in, I went to see the Silver Queen again and that pile was a lot bigger."



"You mean they're still looking?" Brandon's eyes glittered.

"I don't know. Maybe they've stopped. But the pile was bigger than it was ten-eleven years ago so they were still looking then."

Brandon leaned back in his chair and crossed his legs. "Well, now, that's very queer. A hard-headed insurance company is spending all kinds of money, sweeping space near Vesta, trying to find pieces of a twenty-year-old wreck."

"Maybe they're trying to prove sabotage," said Moore.

"After twenty years? They won't get their money back even if they do. It's a dead issue."

"They may have quit looking years ago."

Brandon stood up with decision. "Let's ask. There's something funny here and I'm just Jabrified enough and anniversaried enough to want to find out."

"Sure," said Shea, "but ask who?"

"Ask Multivac," said Brandon.

Shea's eyes opened wide. "Multivac! Say, Mr. Moore, do you have a Multivac outlet here?"

"Yes."

"I've never seen one, and I've always wanted to."

"It's nothing to look at, Mike. It looks just like a typewriter. Don't confuse a Multivac outlet with Multivac itself. I don't know anyone who's seen Multivac."

Moore smiled at the thought. He doubted if ever in his life he would meet any of the handful of technicians who spent most of their working days in a hidden spot in the bowels of Earth tending a milelong super-computer that was the repository of all the facts known to man, that guided man's economy, directed his scientific research, helped make his political decisions, and had millions of circuits

left over to answer individual questions that did not violate the ethics of privacy.

Brandon said as they moved up the power ramp to the second floor, "I've been thinking of installing a Multivac, Jr., outlet for the kidsHomework and things, you know. And yet I don't want to make it just a fancy and expensive crutch for them. How do you work it, Warren?"

Moore said tersely. "They show me the questions first. If I don't pass them, Multivac does not see them."

The Multivac outlet was indeed a simple typewriter arrangement and little more.

Moore set up the co-ordinates that opened his portion of the planet-wide network of circuits and said, "Now listen. For the record, I'm against this and I'm only going along because it's the anniversary and because I'm just jackass enough to be curious. Now how ought I to phrase the question?"

Brandon said, "Just ask: Are pieces of the wreck of the Silver Queen still being searched for in the neighborhood of Vesta by Trans-spacc Insurance? It only requires a simple yes or no."



Moore shrugged and tapped it out, while Shea watched with awe.

The spaceman said, "How does it answer? Does it talk?"

Moore laughed gently, "Oh, no. I don't spend that kind of money, This model just prints the answer on a slip of tape that comes out that slot"

A short strip of tape did come out as he spoke. Moore removed it and, after a glance, said, "Well, Multivac says yes."

"Hah!" cried Brandon. "Told you. Now ask why."

"Now that's silly. A question like that would obviously be against privacy. You'll just get a yellow state-your-reason."

"Ask and find out. They haven't made the search for the pieces secret. Maybe they're not making the reason secret."

Moore shrugged. He tapped out: Why is Trans-space Insurance conducting its Silver Queen search-project to which reference was made in the previous question?

A yellow slip clicked out almost at once: State Your Reason For Requiring The Information Requested.

"All right," said Brandon unabashed. "You tell it we're the three survivors and have a right to know. Go ahead. Tell it."

Moore tapped that out in unemotional phrasing and another yellow slip was pushed out at them: Your Reason Is Insufficient. No Answer Can Be Given.

Brandon said, "I don't see they have a right to keep that secret."

"That's up to Multivac," said Moore. "It judges the reasons given it and if it decides the ethics of privacy is against answering, that's it. The government itself couldn't break those ethics without a court order, and the courts don't go against Multivac once in ten years. So what are you going to do?"

Brandon jumped to his feet and began the rapid walk up and down the room that was so characteristic of him. "All right, then let's figure it out for ourselves. It's something important to justify all the trouble. We're agreed they're not trying to find evidence of sabotage, not after twenty years. But Trans-space must be looking for something, something so valuable that it's worth looking for all this time. Now what could be that valuable?"

"Mark, you're a dreamer," said Moore.

Brandon obviously didn't hear him. "It can't be jewels or money or securities. There just couldn't be enough to pay them back for what the search has already cost them. Not if the Silver Queen were pure gold. What would be more valuable?"

"You can't judge value, Mark," said Moore. "A letter might be worth a hundredth of a cent as wastepaper and yet make a difference of a hundred million dollars to a corporation, depending on what's in the letter."

Brandon nodded his head vigorously. "Right. Documents. Valuable papers. Now who would be most likely to have papers worth billions in his possession on that trip?"

"How could anyone possibly say?"



"How about Dr. Horace Quentin? How about that, Warren? He's the one people remember because he was so important. What about the papers he might have had with him? Details of a new discovery, maybe. Damn it, if I had only seen him on that trip, he might have told me something, just in casual conversation, you know. Did you ever see him, Warren?"

"Not that I recall. Not to talk to. So casual conversation with me is out too. Of course, I might have passed him at some time without knowing it."

"No, you wouldn't have," said Shea, suddenly thoughtful. "I think I remember something. There was one passenger who never left his cabin. The steward was talking about it. He wouldn't even come out for meals."

"And that was Quentin?" said Brandon, stopping his pacing and staring at the spaceman eagerly.

"It might have been, Mr. Brandon. It might have been him. I don't know that anyone said it was. I don't remember. But it must have been a big shot, because on a spaceship you don't fool around bringing meals to a man's cabin unless he is a big shot."

"And Quentin was the big shot on the trip," said Brandon, with satisfaction. "So he had something in his cabin. Something very important. Something he was concealing."

"He might just have been space sick," said Moore, "except that-" He frowned and fell silent.

"Go ahead," said Brandon urgently. "You remember something too?"

"Maybe. I told you I was sitting next to Dr. Hester at the last dinner. He was saying something about hoping to meet Dr. Quentin on the trip and not having any luck."

"Sure," cried Brandon, "because Quentin wouldn't come out of his cabin."

"He didn't say that. We got to talking about Quentin, though. Now what was it he said?" Moore put his hands to his temples as though trying to squeeze out the memory of twenty years ago by main force. "I can't give you the exact words, of course, but it was something about Quentin being very theatrical or a slave of drama or something like that, and they were heading out to some scientific conference on Ganymede and Quentin wouldn't even announce the title of his paper."

"It all fits." Brandon resumed his rapid pacing. "He had a new, great discovery, which he was keeping absolutely secret, because he was going to spring it on the Ganymede conference and get maximum drama out of it. He wouldn't come out of his cabin because he probably thought Hester would pump him-and Hester would, I'll bet. And then the ship hit the rock and Quentin was killed. Transspace Insurance investigated, got rumors of this new discovery and figured that if they gained control of it they could make back their losses and plenty more. So they took ownership of the ship and have been hunting for Quentin's papers among the pieces ever since." Moore smiled, in absolute affection for the other man. "Mark, that's a beautiful theory. The whole evening is worth it, just watching you make something out of nothing."

"Oh, yeah? Something out of nothing? Let's ask Multivac again. I'll pay the bill for it this month."

"It's all right. Be my guest. If you don't mind, though, I'm going to bring up the bottle of Jabra. I want one more little shot to catch up with you."

"Me, too," said Shea.



Brandon took his seat at the typewriter. His fingers trembled with eagerness as he tapped out: What was the nature of Dr. Horace Quentin's final investigations?

Moore had returned with the bottle and glasses, when the answer came back, on white paper this time. The answer was long and the print was fine, consisting for the most part of references to scientific papers in journals twenty years old.

Moore went over it. "I'm no physicist, but it looks to me as though he was interested in optics."

Brandon shook his head impatiently. "But all that is published. We want something he had not published yet."

"We'll never find out anything about that." "The insurance company did."

"That's just your theory."

Brandon was kneading his chin with an unsteady hand. "Let me ask Multivac one more question."

He sat down again and tapped out: Give me the name and tube number of the surviving colleagues of Dr. Horace Quentin from among those associated with him at the University on whose faculty he served.

"How do you know he was on a University faculty?" asked Moore.

"If not, Multivac will tell us."

A slip popped out. It contained only one name.

Moore said, "Are you planning to call the man?"

"I sure am," said Brandon. "Otis Fitzsimmons, with a Detroit tube number. Warren, may I—"

"Be my guest, Mark. It's still part of the game."

Brandon set up the combination on Moore's tube keyboard. A woman's voice answered. Brandon asked for Dr. Fitzsimmons and there was a short wait.

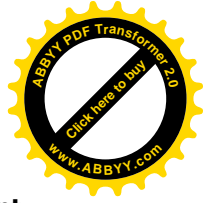
Then a thin voice said, "Hello." It sounded old.

Brandon said, "Dr. Fitzsimmons, I'm representing Trans-space Insurance in the matter of the late Dr. Horace Quentin—"

"For heaven's sake, Mark," whispered Moore, but Brandon held up a sharply restraining band.

There was a pause so long that a tube breakdown began to seem possible and then the old voice said, "After all these years? Again?"

Brandon snapped his fingers in an irrepressible gesture of triumph. But he said smoothly, almost glibly, "We're still trying to find out, Doctor, if you have remembered further details about what Dr. Quentin might have had with him on that last trip that would pertain to his fast unpublished discovery."



"Well"-there was an impatient clicking of the tongue-"I've told you, I don't know. I don't want to be bothered with this again. I don't know that there was anything. The man hinted, but he was always hinting about some gadget or other."

"What gadget, sir?"

"I tell you I don't know. He used a name once and I told you about that. I don't think it's significant."

"We don't have the name in our records, sir."

"Well, you should have. Uh, what was that name? An optikoo, that's it."

"With a K?"

"C or K. I don't know or care. Now, please, I do not wish to be disturbed again about this. Good-bye." He was still mumbling querulously when the line went dead.

Brandon was pleased.

Moore said, "Mark, that was the stupidest thing you could have done, claiming a fraudulent identity on the tube is illegal. If he wants to make trouble for you-

"Why should he? He's forgotten about it already. But don't you see, Warren? Trans-space has been asking him about this. He kept saying he'd explained all this before."

"All right. But you'd assumed that much. What else do you know?"

"We also know," said Brandon, "that Quentin's gadget was called an optikon."

"Fitzsimmons didn't sound certain about that. And even so, since we already know he was specializing in optics toward the end, a name like optikon does not push us any further forward."

"And Trans-space Insurance is looking either for the optikon or for papers concerning it. Maybe Quentin kept the details in his hat and just had a model of the instrument. After all, Shea said they were picking up metal objects. Right?" "There was a bunch of metal junk in the pile," agreed Shea. "They'd leave that in space if it were papers they were after. So that's what we want, an instrument that might be called on optikon."

"Even if all your theories were correct, Mark, and we're looking for an optikon, the search is absolutely hopeless now," said Moore flatly. "I doubt that more than ten per cent of the debris would remain in orbit about Vesta. Vesta's escape velocity is practically nothing. It was just a lucky thrust in a lucky direction and at a lucky velocity that put our section of the wreck in orbit. The rest is gone, scattered all over the Solar System in any conceivable orbit about the Sun."

"They've been picking up pieces," said Brandon.

"Yes, the ten per cent that managed to make a Vestan orbit out of it. That's all."

Brandon wasn't giving up. He said thoughtfully, "Suppose it were there and they hadn't found it. Could someone have beat them to it?"

Mike Shea laughed. "We were right there, but we sure didn't walk off with anything but our skins, and glad to do that much. Who else?"





"That's right," agreed Moore, "and if anyone else picked it up, why are they keeping it a secret?"

"Maybe they don't know what it is."

"Then how do we go about-" Moore broke off and turned to Shea, "What did you say?"

Shea looked blank. "Who, me?"

"Just now, about us being there." Moore's eyes narrowed. He shook his head as though to clear it, then whispered, "Great Gal-

"What is it?" asked Brandon tensely. "What's the matter, Warren?"

"I'm not sure. You're driving me mad with your theories; so mad, I'm beginning to take them seriously, I think. You know, we did take some things out of the wreck with us. I mean besides our clothes and what personal belongings we still had. Or at least I did."

"What?"

"It was when I was making my way across the outside of the wreckage-space, I seem to be there now, I see it so clearly-• I picked up some items and put them in the pocket of my spacesuit. I don't know why; I wasn't myself, really. I did it without thinking. And then, well, I held on to them. Souvenirs, I suppose. I brought them back to Earth."

"Where are they?"

"I don't know. We haven't stayed in one place, you know."

"You didn't throw them out, did you?"

"No, but things do get lost when you move."

"If you didn't throw them out, they must be somewhere in this house."

"If they didn't get lost. I swear I don't recall seeing them here fifteen years."

"What were they?"

Warren Moore said, "One was a fountain pen, as I recall; a real antique, the kind that used an ink-spray cartridge. What gets me, though, is that the other was a small field glass, not more than about six inches long. You see what I mean? A field glass?"

"An optikon," shouted Brandon. "Sure!"

"It's just a coincidence," said Moore, trying to remain levelheaded. "Just a curious coincidence."

But Brandon wasn't having it. "A coincidence, nuts! Trans-space couldn't find the optikon on the wreck and they couldn't find it in space because you had it all along."

"You're crazy,"

"Come on, we've got to find the thing now."

Moore blew out his breath. "Well, I'll look, if that's what you want, but I doubt that I'll find it. Okay, let's start with the storage level. That's the logical place."



Shea chuckled. "The logical place is usually the worst place to look." But they all headed for the power ramp once more and the additional flight upward.

The storage level had a musty, unused odor to it. Moore turned on the precipitron. "I don't think we've precipitated the dust in two years. That shows you how often I'm up here. Now, let's see-if it's anywhere at all, it would be in with the bachelor collection. I mean the junk I've been hanging on to since bachelor days. We can start here."

Moore started leafing through the contents of plastic collapsibles while Brandon kept peering anxiously over his shoulder.

Moore said, "What do you know? My college yearbook. I was a sonist in those days; a real bug on it. In fact, I managed to get a voice recording with the picture of every senior in this book." He tapped its cover fondly. "You could swear there was nothing there but the usual trimensional photos, but each one has an imprisoned-"

He grew aware of Brandon's frown and said, "Okay, I'll keep looking."

He gave up on the collapsibles and opened a trunk of heavy, oldfashioned woodite. He separated the contents of the various compartments.

Brandon said, "Hey, is that it?"

He pointed to a small cylinder that rolled out on the floor with a small clunk.

Moore said, "I don't- Yes! That's the pen. There it is. And here's the field glass. Neither one works, of course. They're both broken. At least, I suppose the pen's broken. Something's loose and rattles in it. Hear? I wouldn't have the slightest idea about how to Sill it so I can check whether it really works. They haven't even made inkspray cartridges in years."

Brandon held it under the light. "It has initials on it." "Oh? I don't remember noticing any." "It's pretty worn down. It looks like J.K.Q." "Q.?"

"Right, and that's an unusual letter with which to start a last name. This pen might have belonged to Quentin. An heirloom he kept for luck or sentiment. It might have belonged to a greatgrandfather in the days when they used pens like this; a greatgrandfather called Jason Knight Quentin or Judah Kent Quentin or something like that. We can check the names of Quentin's ancestors through Muiltivac."

Moore nodded. "I think maybe we should. See, you've got me as crazy as you are."

"And if this is so, it proves you picked it up in Quentin's room. So you picked up the field glass there too."

"Now hold it. I don't remember that I picked them both up in the same place. I don't remember the scrounging over the outside of the wreck that well."

Brandon turned the small field glass over and over under the light. "No initials here."

"Did you expect any?"

"I don't see anything, in fact, except this narrow joining mark here." He ran his thumbnail into the fine groove that circled the glass near its thicker end, He tried to twist it unsuccessfully. "One piece." He put it to his eye. "This thing doesn't work."

"I told you it was broken. No lenses-"



Shea broke in. "You've got to expect a little damage when a spaceship hits a good-sized meteor and goes to pieces."

"So even if this were it," said Moore, pessimistic again, "if this were the optikon, it would not do us any good."

He took the field glass from Brandon and felt along the empty rims, "You can't even tell where the lenses belonged. There's no groove I can feel into which they might have been seated. It's as if there never- Hey!" He exploded the syllable violently.

"Hey what?" said Brandon.

"The name! The name of the thing!"

"Optikon, you mean?"

"Optikon, I don't mean! Fitzsimmons, on the tube, called it an optikon and we thought he said 'an optikon.'"

"Well, he did," said Brandon.

"Sure," said Shea. "I heard him."

"You just thought you heard him. He said 'anoptikon.' Don't you get it? Not 'an optikon,' two words, 'anoptikon,' one word."

"Oh," said Brandon blankly. "And what's the difference?"

"A heil of a difference. 'An optikon' would mean an instrument with lenses, but 'anoptikon,' one word, has the Greek prefix 'an-' which means 'no.' Words of Greek derivation use it for 'no.' Anarchy means 'no government,' anemia means 'no blood,' anonymous means 'no name,' and anoptikon means-

"No lenses," cried Brandon.

"Right! Quentin must have been working on an optical device without lenses and this may be it and it may not be broken."

Shea said, "But you don't see anything when you look through it."

"It must be set to neutral," said Moore. "There must be some way of adjusting it." Like Brandon, he placed it in both hands and tried to twist it about that circumscribing groove. He placed pressure on grunting.

"Don't break it," said Brandon,

"It's giving. Either it's supposed to be stiff or else it's corroded shut." He stopped, looked at the instrument impatiently, and put it to his eye again. He whirled, unpolarized a window and looked out at the lights of the city."

"I'll be dumped in space," he breathed.

Brandon said, "What? What?"

Moore handed the instrument to Brandon wordlessly. Brandon put it to his eyes and cried out sharply, "It's a telescope." Shea said at once, "Let me see."



They spent nearly an hour with it, converting it into a telescope with turns in one direction, a microscope with turns in the other.

"How does it work?" Brandon kept asking.

"I don't know," Moore kept saying. In the end he said, "I'm sure it involves concentrated force fields. We are turning against considerable field resistance. With larger instruments, power adjustment will be required."

"It's a pretty cute trick," said Shea.

"It's more than that," said Moore. "I'll bet it represents a completely new turn in theoretical physics. It focuses light without lenses, and it can be adjusted to gather light over a wider and wider area without any change in focal length. I'll bet we could duplicate the five-hundred-inch Ceres telescope in one direction and an electron microscope in the other. What's more, I don't see any chromatic aberration, so it must bend light of all wavelengths equally. Maybe it bends radio waves and gamma rays also. Maybe it distorts gravity, if gravity is some kind of radiation. Maybe-

"Worth money?" asked Shea, breaking in dryly.

"All kinds if someone can figure out how it works."

"Then we don't go to Trans-space Insurance with this. We go to a lawyer first. Did we sign these things away with our salvage rights or didn't we? You had them already in your possession before signing the paper. For that matter, is the paper any good if we didn't know what we were signing away? Maybe it might be considered fraud."

"As a matter of fact," said Moore, "with something like this, I don't know if any private company ought to own it. We ought to check with, some government agency. If there's money in it-

But Brandon was pounding both fists on his knees. "To hell with the money, Warren. I mean, I'll take any money that comes my way but that's not the important thing. We're going to be famous, man, famous! Imagine the story. A fabulous treasure lost in space. A giant corporation combing space for twenty years to find it and all the time we, the forgotten ones, have it in our possession. Then, on the twentieth anniversary of the original loss, we find it again. If this thing works, if anoptics becomes a great new scientific technique, they'll never forget us."

Moore grinned, then started laughing. "That's right. You did it, Mark. You did just what you set out to do. You've rescued us from being marooned in oblivion."

"We all did it," said Brandon. "Mike Shea started us off with the necessary basic information. I worked out the theory, and you had the instrument."

"Okay. It's late, and the wife will be back soon, so let's get the ball rolling right away. Multivac will tell us which agency would be appropriate and who-

"No, no," said Brandon. "Ritual first. The closing toast of the anniversary, please, and with the appropriate change. Won't you oblige, Warren?" He passed over the still half-full bottle of Jabra water.

Carefully, Moore filled each small glass precisely to the brim. "Gentlemen," he said solemnly, "a toast." The three raised the glasses in unison. "Gentlemen, I give you the Silver Queen souvenirs we used to have."