





















with blood of copper-base chemistry. The common squid of our oceans is one of *them*.' Ger lowered his chin, continued to stare at Trent. "With the generator, I linked the canine dominants of my dogs with a recessive of squid."

"But they could not breed naturally. They . . ." "Of course not. The hounds I sent you were from a line which had no fathers for six generations. I fertilized them with the generator. They had only the female side, open to the first linkage which presented itself." "Why?"

"Because, from my observations of *progoas*, I knew dogs were superior, but could profit by such a cross. I hoped to make that cross myself."

The Vegan looked at the floor. "Varley, it pains me, but I am faced with the evidence that your claim is true. However, the pride of my world would never permit this to be known. Perhaps the Elders should reconsider."

"You know me," said Trent. "You have my word on it."

Ger nodded. "It is as you say, Varley. I know you." He preened a feather crest with three fingers. "And through knowing you, perhaps I have tempered the pride which rules my world." He nodded to himself. "I, too, will remain silent." A subtle Vegan smile flitted across his face, disappeared.

Trent recalled the beagle head he had seen under the parachute when he'd recovered consciousness. "I'd like to see one of these animals."

"That can be . . ." Ger was interrupted by the near baying of a pack of hounds. He stood up, flung open the window louvres, returned to support Trent's head. "Look out there, friend Varley."

On the blue-green Vegan plain, Trent could see a pack of hounds coursing in pursuit of a herd of runaway *ichikas*. The hounds had the familiar beagle head, brown and white fur. All had six legs.