

LIGHT IN DARKNESS
By WILLIAM MORRISON

*Kidnaped for Questioning by Martian Revolutionaries, Randall of the Interplanetary
Police Works Out a Surprising Set of Answers*

THE medal that Sam Randall wore across his chest had been given him by the head of the Interplanetary Police himself, for the display of unusual courage in the line of duty, and it should have been a sort of amulet to ward off fear, but it wasn't. At the moment, Sam Randall was very much afraid.

He could feel the round nose of the stubby atom-pistol in his side, and he could imagine what a slight pressure of a finger on the trigger could do. If the little Martian had looked tougher, more sure of himself, he wouldn't have minded. But to be held up by a man who looked as if a sneeze would scare the wits out of him, and cause a tightening of the tendon that would set off the gun . . .

Sam Randall could be glad of one thing. He didn't look afraid. None of the passersby could guess that he wasn't having a pleasant conversation with the little blue man at his side, and that should have calmed the latter's tremors somewhat. He even managed to make his voice casual as he asked, "What's the big idea?"

"Start walking," ordered the Martian.

"Where to?"

"Straight ahead. I'll tell you when to turn."

Randall started to walk, and the shriveled blue man kept pace with him, the nose of the gun never leaving his side. Several pedestrians turned to look at them, and Randall hoped the Martian wasn't getting nervous.

"Did I ever tell you that one," he began, "about the Irishman—"

He could see the little man jump. "Skip it. Just keep your mouth shut, and walk."

"It's monotonous just walking along without saying anything. It's a good story. It starts off—"

He felt the gun digging into his side harder than ever, and he heard the voice, harsh and undoubtedly afraid. "Shut up!"

His own voice died away. They walked along in silence.

From time to time the little Martian gave him a curt direction. "Turn here," he would say, or, "Don't look back."

Randall knew the territory they were covering, but the Martian didn't seem to care, and that made things look bad. It made it seem that Randall wouldn't have a chance to retrace his path, ever.

JUST when he was beginning to feel tired, they reached a stretch of dark field.

"Straight ahead," came the order.

"But I can't see."

"I can. Straight ahead."

They moved on in the darkness. Randall was more uneasy than ever. He was certainly at a disadvantage now. The Martian could see by infra-red light, but he himself had to move blindly.

"I ought to eat more carrots," said Randall to himself gloomily, but he knew that Vitamin A, or no Vitamin A, the Martian would still have the advantage of him. There was plenty of infra-red around, and to eyes that were sensitive to it, the whole field must seem brightly lighted.

After a time, he heard noises in the distance. Soon he could distinguish the sound of people talking.

"Hold it," said the Martian, and Randall stopped in time to keep from bumping into a space ship. Then he heard a port opening. He was urged ahead, and stumbled into the ship.

The port clanged again. He had the feeling that people were looking him over. Then some one was giving directions in a voice he hadn't heard before, and the ship rose from the ground. He cursed softly to himself. He wished fervently that he could see.

He couldn't even get a glimpse of the flames from the rocket tubes behind them. But after a time he

could feel himself becoming light, and he knew that the ship was passing out of the field of Earth's gravity. When he was about half his usual weight, the artificial gravity went on, and from that time on, there was no further change.

When a dim red light was finally switched on, it was quite unexpected. He stared around him, and whistled. There were five men, all Martians, and one girl. Naturally, it was at her that he looked first. She had at least one-half Earth blood, possibly more, and she was a beauty.

He couldn't help that whistle of his. Any centenarian not a total wreck would probably have tried to whistle through toothless gums at seeing her.

Her face was stern, but she wasn't scowling as the men were. Now that the atom-gun was out of his side, Randall felt the courage flowing back into him.

"What's the big idea of snatching me?" he demanded. "I'm only a poor cop. I can't pay you enough of a ransom to make it worth your while."

One of the Martians spoke. He was buck-toothed, which was unusual among Martians, and his teeth had an unpleasant resemblance to fangs. "You will please hand over the map."

"Huh?"

"I am not joking. I want the map you took from that Irishman."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

The man's eyes gleamed with anger. So there was an Irishman somehow involved in this, thought Randall, and realized suddenly why the man who had kidnaped him had been so upset by his attempt at humor. He had thought Randall was trying to be funny at his expense.

The man spoke again. "Perhaps you have heard of me. I am Mungh Fahz."

"Sure I've heard of you. You're a crook." And then, as an afterthought: "Among other things," added Randall.

Mungh Fahz smiled, showing those fanglike teeth more clearly. "You realize then that when I ask for something, I am serious. Give it to me, please."

"I can't give you what I haven't got."

ANOTHER Martian interrupted. He was a little shorter than Mungh Fahz, and pleasanter looking, although no more pleasant in actuality. "Perhaps, Mungh Fahz, Mr. Randall would like to know why we are so sure the map is in his possession."

A shrug. "You may tell him, Duorr, if it pleases you."

"Last night," said Duorr, "you made an arrest."

"Oh, *that* Irishman. He was only a drunk. Petty nice guy, too. I was sorry. I had to run him in."

"He was not a drunk. He deliberately had himself arrested."

Randall smiled. This was beginning to be funny. "Look, buddy," he replied. "Do you know what he talked to me about on his way to the station? About his dear old mother in good old Ireland, and how one Irishman was worth ten Martians, and again about his good old mother in dear old Ireland. He was as drunk as they come."

"He was pretending," contradicted Duorr coldly. "No doubt he had been drunk before, and he knew how to talk. He was running away from us. He knew that it was only a matter of hours before we caught him, and he had himself arrested so that in the police station he might be out of danger."

"What's that got to do with me?"

"This afternoon he died. The map was not on him."

Randall's eyes narrowed as he took in the meaning of the words. "You killed him. How?"

"He died. We know that he did not give the map to the jailer. You were the only other person who saw him. Therefore he must have given it to you."

"How do you know he didn't pass it over to some one else before I picked him up?"

"We know. He was watched."

Randall bit his lips. "What makes you so sure there was a map, anyway?"

It was Mungh Fahz's turn to interrupt. "It will do us no harm to tell you," he said harshly. "Sean O'Brien was a prospector. He paid a visit to Tellus-B, the planetoid that's also known as Mock-Earth."

Randall nodded. He had heard of this newly discovered planetoid that resembled Earth so closely in gravity and atmosphere.

Unfortunately, it was too far away from the sun to be colonized as otherwise it might have been. There were probably no more than half a dozen people on it at any one time.

"O'Brien discovered several deposits of mundite. The mineral has been sought for before, without success. O'Brien must have had methods of his own of finding the stuff. And once he found it, he *must* have made a map."

"How do you know he found it?"

"Because he became *really* drunk, and boasted of what he could do with it."

"How do you know it was he that was talking, and not the liquor?"

"He carried a tiny specimen of the mineral with him. Not enough to be dangerous, but enough to prove his story. We stole that and tested it to make sure. Unfortunately, we couldn't find the map. But the loss of the mundite warned him."

"Excuse me," said Randall politely at this point. "What the devil is mundite?"

"That," spat out Mungh Fahz, "is none of your business. Where is the map?"

Randall shrugged, and Duorr snapped suddenly, "Enough of this." He didn't look pleasant any more.

HE and Mungh Fahz exchanged glances, and a moment later a newcomer entered. At first Randall took this to be a man, but a second look made him realize it was a Phobian. This was a nerveless, almost brainless creature from Phobos, with a skin that was as near to steel in toughness as anything animate could be. Despite the smallness of the head, the Phobian was close to six feet in height, and Randall would stand no chance whatever in its hands. He knew that without having to be told.

"We shall leave you two together," said Duorr softly.

"Nonsense." Mungh Fahz seemed irritated at the other's stupidity. "There is no need to kill the fool. In fact, it would be distinctly inadvisable."

Randall could see the girl's face drained of color, so that only the faintest blue tinge showed in the white skin. One-quarter Martian, he decided. And still the most beautiful girl he could remember having seen since the days when he was so young that all girls were beautiful.

Mungh Fahz turned out the red light. Randall was in the dark now, although the others could still see clearly. Then Mungh Fahz spoke. Randall moved ahead blindly, and the next thing he knew, something like a steel rod hit him in the chest, making him gasp for breath.

After that he wasn't quite sure what happened. Once or twice he could hear Mungh Fahz speak, giving directions to the Phobian, and later he was under the impression that he had heard the girl cry out. But most of his impressions came to him not through his sense of hearing, but through the senses of touch and pain. The Phobian moved as passionlessly as if it had been a robot, and with the same devastating results.

After fifteen minute, Randall no longer knew he was being hit. It was then that the Phobian suspended operations.

* * *

Randall awoke to find himself in the dark again. But he was not alone. A voice spoke soothingly.

"Drink this."

He felt liquid slopping over his chin.

"Give me some light," he muttered thickly.

"I'm sorry. I forgot you couldn't see." The red light went on, and he perceived the girl standing beside him. She held out the cup, and he gulped down what was in it.

It didn't make him feel any better. He tried to get to his feet, and found that he couldn't. She was watching him, her face rather pale, and Randall wondered, as he had wondered before, what she was doing with this bunch.

"You'd better give it to them," she said. He managed to laugh. "You may think it strange, but I was telling the truth. I never saw that map."

She was silent, and he had a long interval in which to stare at her. Her eyes were the only feature that

were characteristically Martian. They were a deep purple, such as no Earth people had ever possessed. By this red light, they looked almost black.

Randall spoke as if to himself. "I wonder what they'll try after this."

"What do you mean?"

"They've tried beating me up, but that didn't work. Now they're letting you see what you can do, but that isn't going to work, either. I'm curious to know what they'll think up next."

She was flushing. "They didn't send me here. I came of my own accord. I—I thought you would need help."

"And they didn't object?"

"No. They've decided that they want you to stay alive for a while. They know where O'Brien landed on Tellus-B. They intend to retrace the trip that he made in discovering the mundite. That way they hope to make you betray yourself."

RANDALL'S face wrinkled. "Betray myself? I don't get it."

"They're sure that you know what was on the map. When you come across a scene or a landmark that's familiar to you, they expect you to give the fact away."

"I see. And what's to be your part in all this?"

She flushed again. "I'm just an innocent observer. I'm Duorr's secretary. I have been for years."

"Since when has a crook needed a secretary?"

"He isn't a crook. He's a millionaire, and he's never accepted the fact that Mars has federated with the other planets. He believes in Mars First, and he has a plan to break Mars away from the other worlds."

Randall nodded. He had heard of the Mass First movement. It was not very popular, even among Martians, and if not for the wealth of a few of its supporters would have died out long before.

"Mungh Fahz, on the other hand, is not interested in politics," went on the girl. "He's simply a hired man. But he's been promised a bonus if he gets on the trail of that mundite, and he means to earn it."

"I still don't understand how a secretary comes to be mixed up in this."

"I was taken along because Duorr is one of those extremely busy men of affairs, and he has a hundred things to attend to while he's on this trip. Besides, he trusts me. He thinks I admire him."

Randall looked a question.

"I don't, but I keep that fact to myself. Mungh Fahz is a little uneasy about my presence, but he doesn't see what harm I can do, and for that matter, neither do I. That's why I'm allowed so much freedom of movement."

Randall was beginning to feel a little better. He looked into the girl's eyes. "You haven't told me your name."

"It's Marta S'un."

"I'm Sam Randall. Now that we know each other, maybe you can help me get an atom-pistol."

"I might. But you know that an atom-blast can't hurt a Phobian."

"All the same, a weapon might come in handy."

She hesitated. "I'll try to lay my hands on one. But now I'd better get back. Duorr probably has some work for me."

After she had gone, Randall slowly rose to his feet. From what he had learned, it was clearer than ever that Mungh Fahz would never let him go alive. But he wasn't afraid any longer. This was no longer an affair that concerned his safety alone, and just as on the occasion when he had earned that medal, the moment he felt that other people's lives depended on him, his own life didn't count. He could look at things impersonally. Whatever mundite was, it was of sufficient importance for him to make sure that Duorr didn't lay his hands on it.

He didn't see the girl again for a long time. It was the Phobian that brought him food, and Randall, despite the beating he had received from its hands, was able to regard the creature calmly. No nerves, no really vital center, no vulnerability even to an atom-blast. He wondered what he would have to do to dispose of it.

Neither Duorr nor Mungh Fahz bothered to question him again. They must have decided that it would be useless. He didn't know how many days passed while he was in the narrow little room in a corner of the spaceship. But eventually, gravity began to increase again. They were approaching their destination.

He could feel the slight jar as the ship landed. The gravity was a little less than that of Earth, and the slight difference gave him an illusion of great strength. That illusion disappeared quickly when he saw Mungh Fahz. The latter was accompanied by the Phobian, who would be Randall's constant attendant on Tellus-B.

THERE was still a faint glow from the setting sun when he stepped out on land. The distant mountains were swathed in shadowy veils of fog, and for a moment Randall felt as if he were back on Earth again. He had seen this same landscape before, in California. The same white-clad peaks, the same tree-covered foothills, the same fleecy clouds drifting slowly before a gentle wind. Only the sun was different. It was colder, smaller, enfeebled by distance. But there was no chill in the planet's rich atmosphere. As Randall stared about him, night fell. There was little infra-red in the air, and even the Martians found it difficult to see. Duorr switched on a lamp that shed the faintest of red glows. To the Martians it spread a circle of radiance about their camp. Randall himself was still practically in the dark.

He thought of the map O'Brien was supposed to have passed on to him, and chuckled. Mungh Fahz looked up sharply at the sound.

"You find something amusing?"

"It's a story about an Irishman. I started to tell it to the nervous gentleman who kidnaped me."

"You Earth people believe that you have a sense of humor," snapped Mungh Fahz. "You will learn that it does not pay to jest. What have you seen?"

"Nothing you'd be interested in—much."

Duorr had approached, in what to Randall was the dark. "You may not know that this is the place where O'Brien landed on the trip when he discovered the mundite."

"On the contrary, I know it even better than you do."

Duorr's eyes glittered. "You fool, you have given yourself away," he spat out. "You see, Mungh Fahz? He has studied the map. He recognizes the place."

"I've never seen the said map," retorted Randall blandly.

There was hate in Duorr's eyes. Randall knew what was going on in the man's mind. To be so near his objective and yet so far, all because of the stubbornness of one man. Out of the darkness the Phobian approached, and Duorr looked an eager question at the leader of his hired thugs. Mungh Fahz shook his head.

"There'll be time for that later," he said. "Tonight we'll get a good night's rest. Tomorrow we'll attempt to retrace O'Brien's steps."

Randall went to sleep on the ground, on a carpet of soft springy, quill-like leaves that reminded him of pine needles, but were nothing of the sort. He was to learn the next day that they came not from trees, but from the grass. That night, however, he was uninterested in the flora and fauna of this strange imitation of Earth. He was more concerned with securing a good night's rest.

While it was still dark, however, he felt a sharp blow in his side, and awoke. An atom-pistol had fallen beside him. He saw that the Martians had none of their infra-red lamps burning, and he hoped that the delivery of the pistol had gone unobserved, but he couldn't be sure. He thrust it under the shoulder of his shirt, where it made a not very noticeable bulge. His shirt was badly wrinkled and he knew that the slight lump near his shoulder-blade would go unobserved. Now if he could only figure out how to dispose of the Phobian.

He fell asleep on that thought. When he awoke again, the miniature sun had already risen. The Martians were up, and preparing to move.

They set out toward one of the mountains he had been staring at the previous evening. Now there was no mist hanging over them, and the peaks stood out very sharp and distinct. The nearest one must have been a great distance away, for an hour's walking did not bring it appreciably nearer.

AFTER a time, Marta S'un moved over toward Randall. "Mind if I walk alongside you?" she asked. "Not at all."

Mungh Fahz was too close by, and Randall deliberately lagged behind, so that he and the girl were soon alone—except for the Phobian, who hung on their trail with all the persistence of a single-minded robot.

"You needn't mind him," she said. "He's to prevent you from escaping, but he can't understand what we say." "That thing isn't a 'he'; it's an 'it'."

"It doesn't matter. For all practical purposes, we're alone."

"Why?" he asked sharply. "Why doesn't Mungh Fahz mind if you talk to me?"

"Because he thinks he knows what I'll say. I'm supposed to be here—well, for the purpose you thought I had in mind when I first spoke to you."

Randall nodded. He still wasn't sure of her, although the atom-pistol had gone a long way toward convincing him. But he changed the subject with a certain abruptness.

"What is mundite?" he asked.

"It's a mineral discovered only on Tellus-B. It's supposed to be responsible for this planet's being here."

"I don't understand."

"Tellus-B is supposed to have come from far out in space by means of a hyper-spatial short-cut. Some sort of explosion propelled it through other dimensions, so that it cut across a great many light-years of distance in a short time. Mundite is believed necessary for that explosion. Atomic disintegration is enough to set it off."

Randall's mind toyed with the thought. "And Duorr is interested in using mundite as an explosive?"

"That's it," she agreed. "A mundite explosion would put an atomic bomb to shame. It would blow an entire city out of this Universe as easily as you could disintegrate a copper coin."

"I gather that Duorr knows very little about mundite."

"Nobody knows very much. It was first discovered by a Martian, who didn't tell a great deal of what he had found before he departed on an unintended hyperspatial journey himself. As a matter of fact, some people believe the whole thing is a hoax."

"O'Brien didn't think so? He discovered a lode of the stuff?"

"No one knows how."

He stared at her. His expression, he knew, must have seemed unaccountable, for there was a puzzled expression on her face. Then she began to flush.

"Mungh Fahz is waiting for us. He's watching."

He glanced at the Martian brigand. "I suppose he wants to know how you're getting along. You may as well turn in an encouraging report."

He pulled her to him, and very deliberately kissed her. She pushed him away, but she was slow in doing so.

"That wasn't necessary."

"It will help convince Mungh Fahz when you tell him that I know where the mundite is, and that you are soon going to find out."

"You're bluffing."

"I'm telling the truth. Do you want me to offer Mungh Fahz some additional evidence?"

She drew away hastily. "I don't like your idea of evidence. We'd better overtake the others."

That evening, when they made camp, there were intent expressions on the faces of Duorr and Mungh Fahz. Marta's report had evidently filled them with hope. Randall concealed a smile. They were going to get their information about mundite a little sooner than they expected.

HE WAITED until the others were ready to go to sleep. Duorr and Mungh Fahz conferred earnestly for some time after their men had turned in. Randall could hear them even after he could no longer see them in the infra-red darkness. The Phobian was somewhere near Randall, probably staring at him

unwinkingly.

It was time to act—as soon as he knew exactly where that Phobian was. Randall stood up and threw a stone into the darkness. Mungh Fahz's voice rang out sharply.

"What's that?"

"I'm amusing myself. Do you mind?" challenged the Earthman.

"Yes. You'd better stop."

"I don't think so."

Mungh Fahz made a series of ullulating sounds. It was his way of communicating with the Phobian. The next moment Randall heard the creature's footsteps approaching from the left.

He had wanted to make sure exactly where the Phobian was, and now he knew. He aimed his atom-pistol at a piece of dry wood that he had noticed previously on the ground, and hit a corner of it. The wood burst into flame.

By its light, he could see the Phobian twenty feet away, stalking him. He heard Mungh Fahz hiss. "He has an atom-pistol."

"He's a fool," returned Duorr. "It won't do him any good."

Randall threw a tiny pebble at the Phobian, and the latter automatically put up an arm to ward off the missile. A beam lanced out from Randall's weapon. There was the sound of an extremely weak explosion, and then—nothing. The Phobian just wasn't there any more.

There was no smoke, no flame, no vapor of disintegration. The Phobian had simply disappeared, traveling to its death across unimaginable hyper-space, to end up finally in a universe thousands of light-years away.

Then Randall fell flat as two atom-beams lanced out at him from the startled Martians. He had chosen his position in advance, and the rays spent their strength uselessly on the heavy rock in front of him. The piece of dry wood was flaming brightly now, and he knew that the glare was none too good for Martian eyes. He risked putting an arm over the rock, and fired rapidly. He heard a scream from Duorr, and then a hoarse cry from Mungh Fahz.

"Don't shoot! I give up!"

"Walk toward the flame," ordered Randall curtly.

Mungh Fahz stepped forward, with his hands in the air, blinking painfully.

Randall came up in back of the man, ran a quick hand over his clothes. Then he heard a noise behind him, and dropped to the ground again.

"If you value your life, you'd better tell your men to surrender."

But it was none of Mungh Fahz's men. It was Marta.

"Where's Duorr?" she asked quickly. "I think he's dead. You might take a look."

She ran over to the place where the Martian was lying. A second later he heard her voice again. "He hasn't ... he hasn't got any. . . ."

She couldn't finish. Randall had aimed for the head, and he knew that a Martian without a head was not exactly a pleasant sight.

He tossed her the atom-pistol Mungh Fahz had been using. "Keep him covered while I round up the rest."

"All right."

He hesitated only for a second after he had left her. He could hear Mungh Fahz start to speak in a low voice, using some Martian dialect, and then shut up abruptly. A beam from the girl's atom-pistol had trimmed the bandit's hair, leaving the ends neatly singed. Randall went about his task of rounding up the remaining members of Mungh Fahz's crew without looking back to check up on Marta's ability to keep their leader under control.

He found, to his surprise, that none of the crew was awake. Martians slept soundly, as a rule, and these thugs were no exception. He was able to disarm them very peacefully.

AFTERWARD he bound Mungh Fahz himself, hog-tying the bandit leader so neatly that the girl gazed in admiration at the job he had done. Mungh Fahz was no light weight, but knowing that the

bandit's own men would have the job of carrying him back to the space ship, Randall didn't worry about that.

"It's time you got some sleep," he told Marta then. "I'll stay on guard." "I'm not sleepy. And I'd like to know how you found the mundite."

"You mean that pebble I threw at the Phobian?"

She nodded. "You hadn't even heard of it before you came here. How did you recognize it?"

Hog-tied as he was, Mungh Fahz was listening.

"I think," said Randall, "that explanations had better wait till tomorrow. Just in case our bandit friend should get ideas. And I still think you had better get some sleep."

This time, somewhat to Randall's regret, she agreed. Randall stayed up alone, from time to time heaping more wood on the flame his atom-gun had kindled. By the time the first streaks of dawn were brightening the sky he had difficulty keeping his eyes open, but he noted with interest that Mungh Fahz was tied as securely as before, and somewhat more uncomfortably. He had been making futile efforts to escape, and had succeeded only in almost choking himself.

At Randall's order Mungh Fahz' own men carried him back to the space ship. There were a couple of bandits on board, but after they watched Randall make a small grove of trees disappear with the aid of a pebble of mundite and an atom-gun, they were more than anxious to surrender. The Earthman stowed his prisoners, including Mungh Fahz, away in a pair of small rooms in the rear of the ship.

"You won't even breathe the same air we do," Randall told them. "Your part of the ship is hermetically sealed off from mine. In case you manage to start trouble I can blast you all across hyper-space without inconveniencing myself—and it will be a pleasure to do it. So you'd better be good."

He was exaggerating somewhat, he knew, when he claimed that a mundite blast wouldn't inconvenience him, but Mungh Fahz was hardly in a position to call his bluff. Randall settled down to a long and peaceful voyage back to Earth, where he could turn his prisoners over to authorities who would be pleased to take care of them.

They had hardly left Tellus-B when Marta S'un resumed her questioning of the previous night.

"How did you recognize the mundite?" she demanded, puzzled.

Randall smiled at her. "You've got Martian eyes, haven't you, Marta?"

"What has that to do with it?"

"You can see very well by infra-red. You can see even better by red light. In fact, your eyes are so sensitive to red light that they're easily dazzled by it. But on the whole, I don't think they're better or worse than my own. They're simply sensitive to a different range of wavelengths."

She frowned. "You mean that you can see colors that I can't?"

"Exactly. I can perceive violet, which is invisible to you. Ordinarily, that leaves you with the advantage, because in the so-called dark, infra-red light is common, whereas violet light is rare. You can see where everything is dark to me, and I can't see at all where it's dark to you.

"However, there are exceptions. Wherever you run across mundite, you'll find one of those exceptions. The stuff happens to have a violet phosphorescence."

"But Duorr and Mungh Fahz could have used their instruments—"

"They didn't realize the possibility. The first man to discover mundite was a Martian, and before he could learn of the violet glow, he was killed. Then along came O'Brien. He just happened to stay on Tellus-B overnight in the dark, in what I imagine is the one region where mundite is abundant. The violet glow hit him in the eyes. The discovery was as easy as that.

"O'Brien knew that no Martian could see what he himself had seen. And he wasn't afraid of the secret in the hands of an Earthman. That's why he didn't need a map. He simply drew glowing violet arrows pointing to the hills where the mundite deposits were richest, and added a few simple instructions. He scratched these arrows across several rocks with mundite pebbles. I saw them the night we landed. Naturally, Duorr and Mungh Fahz, who couldn't see them, had their suspicions of me confirmed when I told them I knew O'Brien had been there."

"So that's it. And I used to be contemptuous of people with Earth eyes."

"Have you realized," asked Randall irrelevantly, "that your late employer is deceased, and that you are out of a job, with no chance of getting a reference for the next one?"

"No, I haven't."

"In your place, there's just one thing a girl could do. That is, if there was somebody like me around, somebody who was crazy about her and wanted to marry her. I mean, you—"

"This," she complained, "is getting to be confusing."

"I can make it clear by kissing her—I mean, you," said Randall.

And he did.

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