

Yokel with Portfolio (1955)

All through my adolescence I dreamed of becoming a science fiction writer. Feverishly I wrote stories, typed them up, sent them off to the magazines of the day (Astounding Science Fiction, Amazing Stories, Startling Stories, and so forth.) They all came back.

But then, in 1953, when I was 18 and a sophomore at Columbia, I began to make my first sales—an article about science-fiction fandom, then a novel for teenage readers only a few years younger than myself, and then a short story. On the strength of these credentials I was able to get myself a literary agent—Scott Meredith, one of the pre-eminent science-fiction specialists of that era, who represented such notable clients as Arthur C. Clarke, Poul Anderson, Philip K. Dick, and Jack Vance.

My hope was that under the aegis of so powerful an agent my stories would get faster and more sympathetic attention from the editors than they had been getting when I sent them in myself. It didn't quite work that way—maybe I got faster readings, sure, but my stuff was still competing with the stories of Messrs. Clarke, Anderson, Dick, and Vance for space in those editors' magazines. Still, during the course of the next year or so Scott did manage to make a few tiny sales for me to a couple of minor s-f magazines. The first, in June, 1954, was a 1500-worder called "The Silent Colony." Eight tense months later, in February of 1955, he produced a second one: "The Martian," 3000 words, which Scott sold to William L. Hamling's *Imagination*, an unpretentious little penny-a-word market that filled its pages with stories that various top-level writers (Gordon R. Dickson, Robert Sheckley, Philip K. Dick, Damon Knight) had been unable to sell to better-paying magazines. I was pleased to be joining their company. Even though these two sales had netted me a grand total of \$40.50, I felt I was on my way toward the start of a career. And I was still only a junior in college, twenty years old, after all. There would be time later on to consider whether I could actually earn a living this way.

Three more months went by before my next sale: a second one to Hamling, "Yokel with Portfolio." Looking at it now, I suppose that I wrote it with Horace Gold's *Galaxy Science Fiction* in mind, or Anthony Boucher's *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, since those two top-of-the-field editors were particularly fond of the sort of light, slick science fiction that I imagined "Yokel with Portfolio" to be. But the Meredith agency obviously didn't think I was quite ready for prime time yet, for I see from the agency records that they sent it straight to *Imagination* in March of 1955 and that on May 8 Hamling bought it for \$55. It was published in the November, 1955 issue of *Imagination's* new companion magazine, *Imaginative Tales*, and here it is again for the first time in half a century—my third published short story, no classic but, I think, a decent enough job for the lad of twenty that I was at the time I wrote it.

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It was just one of those coincidences that brought Kalainnen to Terra the very week that the bruug escaped from the New York Zoo. Since Kalainnen was the first Traskan to come to Terra in over a century, and since the bruug had lived peacefully in the zoo for all of the three or four hundred years or more since it had been brought there from outer space, the odds were greatly against the two events coinciding. But they did.

Kalainnen, never having been on a world more complex than the agrarian backwater of civilization that was his native Trask, was considerably astonished at his first sight of gleaming towers of New York, and stood open-mouthed at the landing depot, battered suitcase in hand, while the other passengers from his ship (Runfoot, Procyon-Rigel-Alpha-Centauri-Sol third-rate runner) flocked past him to waiting friends and relatives. In a very short time the depot was cleared, except for Kalainnen and a tall young Terran who had been waiting for someone, and who seemed evidently troubled.

He walked up to Kalainnen. "I'm from the Globe," the young man said, looking down at him. "I was told there was an alien from Trask coming in on this ship, and I'm here to interview him. Sort of a feature angle—weird monster from a planet no one knows very much about. Know where I can find him?"

The young Terran's hair was long and green. Kalainen felt acutely aware of his own close-cropped, undyed hair. No one had warned him about Terran fashions, and he was beginning to realize that he was going to be terribly out of style here.

"I am from Trask," Kalainen said. "Can I help you?"

"Are you the one who came in just now? Impossible!"

Kalainen frowned. "I assure you, sir, I am. I just arrived this very minute, from Trask."

"But you look perfectly ordinary," said the reporter, consulting some scribbled notes. "I was told that Traskans were reptiles, sort of like dinosaurs but smaller. Are you sure you're from Trask? Procyon IV, that is."

"So that's it," Kalainen said. "You're mistaken, young man. The inhabitants of Procyon IV are reptiles, all right, in more ways than one. But that's Quange. Trask is Procyon of Terran descent; the Traskans are not aliens but from Terra. We were settled in—"

"That doesn't matter," said the reporter, closing his notebook. "No news in you. Reptiles would be different. Hope you enjoy your stay."

He walked away, leaving Kalainen alone in the depot. It had not been exactly a promising introduction to Terra, so far. And he hadn't even had a chance to ask for anything yet.

He checked out of the depot, passed through customs without much difficulty (the only problem was explaining where and what Trask was; the planet wasn't listed in the Registry any more) and headed out into the busy street.

It made him sick.

There were shining autos buzzing by, and slick little copters, and hordes of tall people in plastiline tunics, their hair dyed in fanciful colors, heading for unknown destinations at awesome speed. The pavement was a deep golden-red, while the buildings radiated soft bluish tones. It was not at all like Trask, quiet, peaceful Trask. For an unhappy moment Kalainen wondered whether the best thing for Trask would not be for him to turn around and take the next liner back; did he really want to turn it into another Terra? But no: the technology of Trask had fallen centuries behind that of the rest of the galaxy's, and he had come for aid. Trask had been virtually forgotten by Terra and was stagnating, off in its corner of the sky. Kalainen's mission was vital to Trask's continued existence.

Before he left they had dressed him in what they thought were the latest Terran styles and cropped his hair in approved fashion. But, as he walked through the crowded streets of the metropolis, it became more and more apparent that they were centuries behind in dress, as well. He was hopelessly out of date.

"Yokel!" called a high, childish voice. "Look at the yokel!" Kalainen glanced up and saw a small boy pointing at him and giggling. A woman with him—his mother, probably—seized him roughly by the wrist and pulled him along, telling him to hush. But Kalainen could see on her face a surreptitious smile, as if she agreed with the boy's derision.

The rest of the walk was a nightmare of snickers and open laughs. Even the occasional alien he saw seemed to be sneering at him, Kalainen trudged along, feeling horribly short and dumpy-looking, regretting his old-fashioned clothes and close-cut hair and battered suitcase, and regretting the whole foolish journey. Finally he found the address he was heading for—a hotel for transient aliens—and checked in.

The hotel had facilities for all sorts of monstrosities, but, since Trask was an Earth-type planet, he accepted one of the ordinary rooms, and sank gratefully down on a pneumochair.

"Hello," said the chair. "Welcome to Terra."

Kalainen leaped up in fright and looked around the room. There was no one else present. Probably some sort of advertising stunt, he concluded. Piped in from above. He sat down again in relief.

"Hello," said the chair. "Welcome to Terra."

He frowned. How often were they going to welcome him? He looked around the room for the loudspeaker, hoping to find it and rip it out. There was no sign of one. He sat down again.

"Hello," the chair said a third time. "Welcome to Terra."

"So that's it!" Kalainen said, looking at the chair. He wondered if every chair in the hotel spoke to its extraterrestrial occupant, and, if so, how long the occupants could stand it.

Pressing gingerly on the seat of the pneumochair revealed that the voice was activated by weight. He dropped his suitcase heavily on the chair, ignoring the fourth welcome, and sat carefully on the edge of the bed, waiting for chimes or some other sign of welcome. Nothing was forthcoming. He leaned back, and rested.

Tomorrow he would have to try to get an audience with the Colonial Minister, in hopes of arranging some sort of technical-assistance program for Trask. But now, he thought, as he swung his legs up and got under the covers, the first thing was to get some sleep. Terra was a cold and unfriendly world, and his appearance was not calculated to win him any friends. He would rest. The bed was much too soft, and he longed for the simple life on Trask.

Just as he began to drop off into sleep, a sudden and powerful buzzing noise jolted him out of bed.

Astonished, he looked around, wondering what the buzzing meant. It was repeated, and this time he realized it was a signal that someone was at the door. A visitor, so soon? There were no other Traskans on Terra; of that, he was fairly certain.

After a moment's confusion with the photo-electric device that controlled the door, he got it open. The green, reptilian face of a Quangen stared blandly up at him.

"Oh," the Quangen said. "They told me someone was here from the Procyon system, and I was sort of hoping—"

"Yes," said Kalainen. "I know. You were hoping I was from your planet, not mine. Sorry to disappoint you. Anything else I can do for you?" He stared at the Quangen coldly. Little love was lost between the neighboring planets.

"You needn't be so inhospitable, friend," said the Quangen. "Our peoples are not the best of friends at home, but we're almost brothers this far from Procyon."

The Quangen was right, Kalainen conceded to himself. Poor company was better than none at all, anyway.

"You're right. Come on in," he said. The Quangen nodded his head—the equivalent of a smile—and stomped in, flicking his tail agilely over his shoulder to prevent it from being caught in the door.

"What brings you to Terra?" said the Quangen.

"I might ask the same of you," Kalainen said.

"You can, if you want too," said the reptile. "Look, fellow: I told you before, maybe our planets don't get along too well, but that's no reason why we shouldn't. I see no harm in telling you that I'm here on a technical-aid mission. It's about time Quange caught up with the rest of the galaxy. I'll bet that's why you're here, too."

Kalainen debated for a moment and then decided there was no reason why he shouldn't admit it.

"You're right," he said. "I have an appointment with the Colonial Minister for tomorrow." It wasn't quite the truth—he was only going to try to get an appointment the next day—but an old Traskan proverb warns against being too honest with Quangens.

"Oh, you do, eh?" said the Quangen, twirling the prehensile tip of his tail around his throat in an expression of, Kalainen knew, amusement. "That's very interesting. I've been waiting two years and I haven't even come close to him. How do you rate such quick service?" He looked meaningfully at Kalainen, flicking his tail from side to side.

"Well," said Kalainen, nearly sitting down in the chair and avoiding it at the last moment, "well—"

"I know," said the Quangen. "You can't help being a Traskan, even on Terra. I'll forgive you. But you don't really have an appointment tomorrow, do you?"

"No," Kalainen said. "As a matter of fact, I haven't even applied yet. I just got here."

"I thought so," the reptile said. "In two years I've gotten as far as the First Assistant Undersecretary. The Colonial Minister is a very busy man, and there are more outworld planets than you can imagine. I've been living here. The hotel's full of outworlders like us who are stuck here waiting to see some bureaucrat or other. I'll introduce you around tomorrow. After two years it's good to see someone from the same system."

Kalainen frowned. They hadn't told him the mission might go on and on for a matter of years. As it was, a single afternoon on Terra had been a profoundly distressing experience. And two years?

"By the way," the Quangen said. "There's one little feature of the furniture here that must be bothering you. We more experienced hands know how to circumvent it." He extended his tail under the seat of the pneumochair, explored the insides of the chair for a moment, and then pulled his tail out quickly. An abortive "Hello, welcome to—" started out of the chair and died.

"Sit down," the Quangen said. Kalainen did. The chair was silent.

"Thank you," Kalainen said. "The chair was bothering me."

"It won't any longer," said the Quangen. "I'm Hork Frandel, by the way."

"My name's Kalainen," Kalainen said. He stared glumly out the window. "What's that box over there?" he said.

"The video," Frandel explained. "Put a quarter in the slot and it plays. It's entertaining, but it's one aspect of Terran technology I'd just as soon not bring back to Quange. You may like it, of course."

"I don't have any coins," Kalainen said. "All I have is Galactic Traveler's Checks."

"Allow me," said the Quangen. He reached into his upper hip pocket with his tail and withdrew a small coin, which he inserted in the appropriate slot. The video flickered and came to life.

"The big news of the day!" said a deep, robust voice, and the screen showed a fleeing multitude, "All New York is in terror today. For the first time in over a century, a dangerous alien beast has escaped from New York's famed Zoological Gardens and is roaming the city." The camera showed a deserted cage.

The scene cut to a very scientific-looking office and the camera focused on a dapper man with extravagant mustaches. "I'm Carlson," he said, "head of the zoo. We're unable to account for the escape. The animal lived here peacefully for centuries. It's something like an ape, something like a tiger. Eats anything. Completely indestructible, perhaps immortal, hitherto quite docile though frightening-looking. Skin like stone, but flexible. Origin is somewhere on one of the smaller outworlds; unfortunately our records have been misfiled and we're not sure exactly where the animal comes from. My guess is Rigel II, possibly Alpheraz VI." He smiled, doing impossible things with his mustaches, and radiating an aura of complete confidence.

"We're taking all possible steps for the beast's recapture; meantime DO NOT PANIC, but avoid unnecessary going out."

Kalainen looked at the Quangen, who looked back balefully.

"Things like this happen all the time?" Kalainen asked.

"Not too often," Frandel said. He looked boredly at the screen, which was showing shots of some incomprehensible sporting event, apparently having lost interest in the escaped animal. He glanced at his watch—Kalainen noted how incongruous the Terran-type watch seemed against the Quangen's scaly skin—and got up.

"I've got to be moving on," he said. "But maybe I'll see you at the Colonial Ministry tomorrow, if it's safe to go out. I've got an appointment to ask for an appointment." The Quangen grinned, waved his tail in salute, and left.

Kalainnen watched the video until the time Frandel had bought for him expired. The camera had gone to another office, the mayor's, and he was discussing the situation. The plans being concocted for capture of the beast were growing more and more elaborate as the minutes went on; the animal had taken up headquarters in an office building (hastily evacuated) and Terran police had established a cordon around the building, with heavy artillery trained on the entrance waiting for the animal to appear. Kalainnen wondered what the point of using artillery on an indestructible beast was, but the mayor did not dwell on the point.

Suggestions offered by various authorities over the video included flooding the building with radiation, building a steel wall around the edifice, and bombing the whole area. Erecting the wall seemed the only solution of any value, but there was always the consideration that the hungry animal might appear before the wall was finished, causing all sorts of difficulties. Kalainnen had no coins, and so he climbed into the too-soft bed and, after a while, fell asleep, pondering the state of affairs.

The next morning he went down to the Colonial Ministry. Since the animal was, at least in theory, under control, people were going about business as usual, but they were moving quickly and cautiously through the streets as if they expected to be devoured at any instant.

It was not difficult to find the Ministry—it was one of the biggest of a great many immense buildings. But it was crowded. There were colonists of all shapes and sizes pleading their various cases. Lines of outworlders extended in all directions—humans, humanoids, and grotesque total-aliens wearing protective devices of great complexity. Besides those on line, many more milled around aimlessly, apparently too confused and too deafened by the enormous hubbub to do anything else. Kalainnen could see now why the Quangen had got no farther than a First Assistant Undersecretary in two years.

"Where is this line heading?" he asked a tall purple beanpole, probably hailing from an inner world of Arcturus.

"I don't know," the beanpole said. "But it seems to be a short one."

A cucumber-like alien from a planet Kalainnen didn't know turned around and said, "Just got here? Try that line over there." Kalainnen followed where the stubby tentacle pointed, and joined the other line, which seemed to stretch off endlessly. The new line seemed to be composed almost exclusively of humans and humanoids; occasionally a small dog-like being ran up and down the line, laughing wildly. In two hours the line moved seven feet. By late afternoon the line had unaccountably moved back until it was almost four feet behind where Kalainnen had joined it. Sensing there was no point in waiting any longer, since he still had not been able to find out what line he was on (not that it seemed to matter) and he had not been able to get anywhere in particular, he left, completely discouraged.

The Quangen, he knew, was a slick, shrewd operator—it was a characteristic of the race—and yet even he had failed to reach any appreciable proximity to the Colonial Minister. What chance, then, did he, Kalainnen, a visiting yokel from a backwater planet, have?

It didn't look as if Trask were going to get the technological assistance it needed, he thought—not if every day were like this one. In a way it wasn't so bad—Trask seemed to get along all right on tools five centuries out of date—but he would feel terribly unhappy about returning empty-handed. The whole planet had contributed to pay his passage, and he had been hailed as the savior of Trask. He had been a hero there; here he was just a stubby little man of no particular importance.

He walked all the way back to the hotel, feeling dismal. Everyone he passed seemed to be discussing the monster loose in the city, and he found himself wishing devoutly that the animal would eat them all, slowly.

"Get anywhere?" asked Frandel that evening.

Kalainnen shook his head.

"That's too bad," the Quangen said, soothingly. "It took me a month to get my petition received,

though, so don't worry too much. It's just a matter of going there regularly, and getting there before everyone else."

"What time does it open?" Kalainen asked, too weary to look up.

"About 0800, I think. But you'll have to get there about midnight the night before to make any headway. In fact, you'd be wise to start out right now and wait on line till it opens. You might be one of the first."

"Leave now? Stand on line all night?"

"You don't like the idea?" The Quangen grinned toothily. "Unfortunate. But you're likely to disappoint all the folks back on Trask unless you do it. I didn't enjoy it, either. Oh, by the way—I moved up a notch today. My application is now up to the Second Assistant Under-Secretary, and I might get to the First Associate in a couple of weeks. I should be bringing quite a load of valuable data back to Quange before long. In fact, there's a very good chance that we'll be leaving Trask far, far behind." He curled his tail derisively.

That's all we need, Kalainen thought. He waved his hand feebly. "Congratulations. Fine. Leave me alone, will you?"

The Quangen bowed, grinned, and left.

Kalainen stared at the video set for a long time after the reptile's departure. The Quangen certainly was a slick operator. It might be ten years before Kalainen got close to the Colonial Minister. Even for as slow-moving a planet as Trask, ten years was a long time. They might think he was dead.

He played with the handful of coins he had accumulated during the day, and finally dropped one in the video. He stared glumly as the set came to life.

"New York remains paralyzed by the unknown alien monster in its midst," a staccato voice said. "The animal is still somewhere in the building in the heart of the business district that it took over late yesterday, and a fearsome range of artillery is waiting for it to emerge. Do not panic. The situation is under study by our foremost experts on extraterrestrial life.

"And now, for the first time, we can show you what this monster looks like. Zoo officials have supplied a photograph of the animal." The photograph appeared on the screen. Kalainen reached to turn off the set, then stopped as the features of the beast behind the bars registered.

It was a bruug.

He sat back in his chair, startled. His first thought was one of incredulity. The whole city terrorized by a bruug? They were the most peaceful, the most—

Then he thought of calling the video station. They would be interested in learning the identity of the monster, the planet it came from, all the data that the zoo officials had misplaced or (more likely) forgotten.

Then he realized he was the ace in the hole.

At the rate he was going, he would never come to the Terrans' notice, and, just as Trask was a forgotten backwater of the Galaxy, he would remain in this hotel, forgotten by Terra and, eventually, by Trask.

But there was one thing he could do. He was of vital importance to Terra, though they didn't realize it. The bruug, the familiar red beast, was virtually a domestic animal on Trask; every Traskan could handle one like a pet. It was all a matter of understanding animals, and this the Traskans did superbly. No bomb would do any good—not on an animal with a hide like that. No; it was understanding. A few gentle words from a Traskan and the animal would lie down placidly. Understanding.

And who understood the bruug? Kalainen. His way seemed perfectly clear to him.

Of course, the bruug might not be red. It might be blue. The only way he could tell was by close examination. And if the bruug were blue—but he preferred not to think about that.

Anyway, it would be good to see something from home again.

The streets were deserted. No Terran cared to venture out into the night while the bruug was loose in the city, no matter how many guns were trained on it. The spectacle of an immense city completely terrorized by an animal of which he himself had no more fear than of a butterfly amused Kalainen as he walked down to the building where they bruug was.

It was a long walk, but the city was intelligently planned and he had no trouble finding his way. He enjoyed the walk; the air was clean and fresh at night, almost like Trask, and there were no people in the streets to snicker at him.

Finally, in the distance, he glimpsed some big guns and a group of soldiers. He began to trot a little. When he reached the guns, the soldiers stopped him.

"What do you want?" said a very tall man in a very resplendent uniform. In the dim light Kalainen saw that his hair was dyed a flaming bronze-red. "Are you crazy, walking right in here?"

"I'm from Trask," Kalainen said. "We know how to handle these animals. Let me through, please." He started to walk on.

"Just a minute!" The big soldier grabbed him; Kalainen twisted loose. Two other soldiers dove for him and caught him, and he found himself looking up at an even taller and more resplendent one.

"This guy says he's from Flask, sir," the first soldier said. "Says he knows how to handle the animal."

"That's right," Kalainen said. "They're domestic animals on Trask."

The officer looked at him—he was more than a foot taller than Kalainen—and laughed. "Domestic animal, eh? Pet for the kiddies? Take him away—anywhere, just out of my sight."

As the first soldier reached for Kalainen, a mighty roar erupted from the office building. Kalainen felt a thrill of familiarity; knowing there was a bruug in the vicinity—even a blue one—was a comforting feeling.

"All hands to battle stations!" the officer roared. "Prepare to fire!"

The bruug roared again from somewhere inside the building. The soldiers dashed to the gun installations, and suddenly Kalainen found himself standing alone and ignored. He looked briefly around and began to run as fast as he could for the entrance to the building, ignoring the outraged and amazed yells of the soldiers who watched him.

The building was unlighted and very big. Kalainen wandered around in the dark for a moment or two, hoping the bruug would not appear before he had acclimated his vision to the darkness. From somewhere on an upper floor, he heard the deep-throated roar he knew so well. The poor beast was hungry.

Bruugs were docile animals. But the blue bruugs of Kandarth, the deserted island in South Trask, were hardly so. And they refused to be understood.

As he wandered through the darkened building, he began to wonder whether or not he was biting off more than he was going to get down his throat. If the bruug were blue, well, that was it. But even if it were the domesticated kind, it had, after all, been captured (or, more likely, given away by the Traskans) centuries before. Perhaps it had forgotten.

The roaring grew louder. Kalainen mounted the stairs.

It was dark, but he was growing accustomed to the darkness and could see fairly well. Not well enough to discern the color of the bruug's skin at a distance, though; he would have to look under the thick fur, and by the time he got that close it no longer mattered much.

On the fourth floor he came across the bruug, sprawled out in the corridor and munching angrily on a splintered door. The bruug was a big one; he had prospered in captivity. He scented Kalainen and

looked up slowly at him and emitted a great roar.

"Hello," Kalainen said, looking at the beast's eyes. As it began to lumber to its feet, Kalainen walked toward it, smiling, trying desperately not to let his fear show through and destroy his chances of mastering the animal. The roars of the bruug filled the hall. Kalainen began to talk to it, calmly, in Traskan.

It rose to its full height and began to charge.

"No. You don't want to do that at all," Kalainen said, listening to the echoes of his voice rattling down the corridor. "You don't want to do that."

Ten minutes later he emerged from the building, with the bruug following docilely behind.

It had been a red one.

The Colonial Minister was a jovial-looking rotund man, one of the few unimpressive-looking Terrans Kalainen had ever seen. Kalainen studied his features for a moment or two, and looked down again at the text of the agreement whereby Terra would supply the planet Trask with a team of technologists and whatever aid would be necessary, in return for valuable services rendered by an inhabitant of the aforementioned planet Trask, etc., etc.

"It sounds reasonable enough," Kalainen said. "I think it'll meet our needs admirably."

"I'm pleased to hear that, Mr. Kalainen," the Colonial Minister said. "But I still don't understand how a planet whose people have such skills as you showed can need any help from us."

"It's a matter of different kinds of skills, Mr. Minister," Kalainen said. "Every planet understands certain things that no other one does. Once in a book of Terran folklore—we have a few old Terran books on Trask—I read a story that reminds me of this. It seems a backwoodsman came to a big city, and, amid the roaring of traffic, said he heard a cricket chirping. They laughed at him, but he walked down a street and pointed out a nearby sewer opening and sure enough, they found a little cricket in the opening. Everyone congratulated him for his miraculous powers of hearing. But he proved that he didn't hear any better than anyone else, just that he heard different things."

"How did he do that?" the Minister murmured.

"It was easy. He took a small coin out of his pocket and dropped it on the sidewalk. Two hundred people stopped and looked around at the sound."

The Minister smiled. Kalainen knew from experience that he was a busy man, but at the moment he had the upper hand and he wanted to make the most of it.

"The moral of the story is, sir, that some planets are good for one thing and some for another. And so if you'll give us the tools we need, we'll show you why ferocious monsters on Terra are pleasant pets on Trask. Fair enough?"

"Fair enough," said the Minister. He extended his pen to Kalainen, who signed the agreement with a flourish.

On his way out of the Ministry he passed Frandel, who was standing gloomily in the midst of a seemingly endless line.

"Let's get together again some time," Kalainen said, pausing for a moment. The Quangen just glared at him angrily. "Let me know when you get back to our system, old man. Perhaps you'd like to come over to Trask and study our technology." Kalainen smiled. "Best of luck, friend. The Minister is a fine man; you'll see that as soon as you get to see him. If you get to see him, that is."

And Kalainen walked on, feeling very pleased, and—unintentionally, of course—treading on the tip of this Quangen's prehensile tail, which he had wanted to do all his life.

