

Robert F. Young died late last year, and this will be his last story in F&SF. It is a typically inventive, fast-paced Robert Young story, which demonstrates one of his main interests, concern for the environment. The story concerns, among other things, the rape of a primitive planet, but in this case, the natives have a few tricks for the developers ...

The Giant, the Colleen, and the Twenty-one Cows

**BY
ROBERT YOUNG**

Harry Westwood came to a green valley and descended its gentle slope. He felt like Jack, of "Jack and the Beanstalk." He hadn't climbed a beanstalk, but the plateau he had just walked across added up to the same thing.

"You get out there fast, Westwood," Simmons, the chief of the God Bless branch of the New Netherlands Land Company, had told him. "Those dumb natives who made that big bastard up have taken it into their heads to try to knock him off themselves, and the company doesn't want any dead Bimbos on its conscience. When I flew over his castle, he was afraid to come out, but he's not going to be afraid when all he's got to contend with are a bunch of dumb Bimbos carrying spears."

"After all the land you guys have stolen and all the natives you've torn up by the roots and located somewhere else," Harry Westwood said, "I should think that by this time your collective conscience would have about as much sensitivity as an anvil."

"You Beowulfs always were too fucking smart!"

"You just see to it you don't fly over his castle again, you or anybody else," Harry Westwood said. "He's my baby now."

He had set out before dawn and met the rose-red maiden on the way. It was early morning now. Although the "beanstalk" lay behind him, he still had many miles to go. East of the valley he had just come to was the valley where the Bimbos lived, which the land company had named Xanadu and which it intended to divide into lots, once the Bimbos were gotten rid of, to be sold at fabulous prices to anyone on Earth who had had enough of Earth and had enough money to buy one. East of Xanadu lay the valley of Feefifofum, which the company also owned and also intended to divide into lots, once Harry Westwood got rid of the giant. And then there were hills and mountains.

According to Simmons, the Bimbos called the giant "Feefifofum" because "Fee-fi-fo-fum" was what he always said whenever he came out of his castle to chase them away. A coincidence? Harry Westwood figured that it had to be. You could stretch Jung's theory of universal archetypes a long way, but you couldn't stretch it all the way to the stars.

The valley was narrow; he walked across it with long easy strides. He had been a Beowulf for many years; the hard lines of his thin face said so. Tall and spare, he wore his plaid shirt open at the neck; his trousers were gray, his boots black. He started up the valley's other slope. He carried his Folz-Hedir in sling position; he hardly knew the weight of his knapsack. Attached to his belt were his canteen and extra charges for the rifle. The whiskey he had drunk last night was only a dim memory and did not in the least becloud his mind.

He always hunted on foot, patterning his tactics after those of the ancient Iroquois.

After breasting the slope, he made his way across a tree-scattered expanse of high ground and looked down into Xanadu. The valley dwarfed the one he had just crossed; he could barely see the opposite slope. The valley floor was a cosmic green carpet patterned with trees. Below him a narrow

forest began; it extended all the way to the opposite slope. He knew that there were hundreds of Bimba villages, but the valley was ten times as long as it was wide, and he could discern only one. It stood near a small stream not far from the forest.

The forest would provide him with excellent cover. He looked at his compass. He had mentally mapped out the route he would take from the directions Simmons had given him, and the forest roughly followed the mental line he made across the valley. It would never do for him to reveal himself to the Bimbas, for they hadn't yet graduated from the headhunter phase of their development. He worked his way down the long slope, taking advantage of the natural camouflage of bushes and copses, and stepped into the woods, but only deep enough for the forest's leafy face to hide him. The forest floor provided easy walking, and although no one outside the forest could see him, he would be able to see anyone who happened by, by peering through the interstices between the leaves.

There could be Bimbas in the woods. He kept an eye out for them, but did not bother to unsling his gun. He heard the village long before he neared it, but the sounds he heard weren't ordinary day-to-day sounds, which wouldn't have reached his ears so soon in any case. He heard instead the rhythmic thumping of many feet, women's voices raised in savage chant, and men's voices giving vent to war cries reminiscent of the Amerinds.

The village's gateway faced the forest. When he came opposite the gateway, he thought at first that the bulbous objects hanging down from its crude arch were onions that had been hung up by their leaves to dry; then he realized that the objects were human heads that had been hung by the hair.

He had a good view of the square in the village's center, and saw a churning mass of molasses-colored bodies, spiked with spears. He could have climbed a tree and obtained a better view, but he didn't bother. He'd already seen enough to know that Simmons had spoken the truth when he said the natives had decided to knock off Feefifofum themselves.

The dance must have just begun, otherwise he would have heard the ungodly racket before he had. As a rule when primitive people unwittingly brought a bugaboo to life through their mass belief in its reality, they tiptoed around by day and hid under their beds at night. So he knew it would be a long while before the Bimbas in this village and those in the others (he assumed from what Simmons had said that intertribal warfare had been superseded by a joint effort whose goal was the extirpation of the giant) got up enough nerve to put their spears where their mouths were.

If enough of the natives attacked at once and didn't chicken out at the mere sight of their quarry, poor Feefifofum wouldn't stand a chance. So he knew he'd better beat them to the punch. He had come to hate killing bugaboos incarnate, but he hated losing out on his bounty even more.

The hanging heads again caught his eye. He put two and two together and came up with a possible answer to the Bimbas' deviation from the norm:

They wanted Feefifofum's head.

When he reached the stream near which the village stood, he walked deeper into the woods before he waded across. He intended to make damn sure the Bimbas didn't get *his* head.

Reentering the woods, he worked his way back almost to the forest's edge and continued his trek across the valley. When his wristwatch said twelve o'clock (the mechanism had been accelerated to keep God Bless time), he stopped and ate, although he wasn't really hungry. That afternoon he saw a herd of antelope far out on the valley floor. There were many such herds in Xanadu. The herbivores' only predators were the Bimbas, who ate antelope flesh for breakfast, dinner, and supper, and made their clothes out of the hides.

So absorbed was he in the distant herd, he failed to see the Bimba warrior walking toward him till the two men were less than ten feet apart. The Bimba must have been preoccupied also, for he didn't see Harry till Harry saw him. The Bimbas were tall, thin aborigines, reminiscent of the Masai, except for their lighter hue. This one wore short antelope-hide pants. His painted face indicated he was headed for the shindig taking place in the village. He carried a long wooden spear with a stone tip and thrust through a loop on the thong belt that held up his pants was a knife with a stone blade.

The appearance of Harry Westwood jolted him as much as his own appearance jolted Harry. Both recovered their wits at the same instant. The Bimba let loose a long howl, and charged, the tip of his spear pointed at Harry's chest. Harry stood his ground and unslung his rifle. He hadn't anywhere near time enough to bring it up to his shoulder, so he used the barrel to deflect the Bimba's spear and then brought the butt around and smashed it against the side of the Bimba's jaw. The Bimba blinked, dropped his spear, and sagged to the forest floor.

Harry Westwood picked up the spear and made a good javelin throw, and the spear buried itself in the tall grass a good hundred feet from the forest. He threw the Bimba's knife after it. After the Bimba came to, he would have fun looking for them, and Harry knew he would see no more of him that day. Nevertheless, he didn't resling his rifle; he carried it instead in his right hand, which had been made on Earth and with which, despite its artificiality, he could do everything he had been able to do with the real one before it had been bitten off.

He didn't reach the valley's other slope till late in the afternoon. It proved to be a long, arduous climb. When at length he reached level ground, the damsel Dusk, wearing a gray gown, greeted him. Minutes later she made her exodus, and her sister Night stepped upon the scene.

He doubted that the ridge upon which he stood was very wide, so unless he had strayed way off course, Feefifofum's castle couldn't be very far away. But he wasn't going to go looking for it in the dark. He would get a good night's sleep first.

After inflating his pneumo-tent, he activated his portable campfire. The flames leapt up brightly, and he sat down near the fire and opened a thermo-pac of beans and bacon and bread, and a vac-pac of coffee. After he finished eating, he lighted a cigarette to go with the rest of his coffee and sat there contemplating the stars.

Presently the conviction stole over him that he was being contemplated himself.

He closed his eyes and kept them closed till he was certain he could see in the dark, then turned off the fire. He gave the foils several minutes to lose their red glow, then opened his eyes and looked quickly all around him. He caught a pale blur of movement to his right and, rifle in hand, got to his feet. The starlight was bright enough for him to make out a slender figure running off into the night, bright enough, in fact, for him to tell that it was the figure of a girl.

He took off after her. She ran so fast, he had a hard time keeping her in sight. There were but few trees and they were scattered, so there was no place for her to hide, but all of a sudden she disappeared. He ran forward to where he had last seen her, and came to a halt at the edge of a long slope that led down into the valley of Feefifofum. He saw the giant's castle. It looked as though it had been lifted from the pages of *Le Morte d'Arthur* and set down on the valley floor. The girl was running diagonally down the slope in its direction. He gave up trying to catch her, and stayed where he was. He could still see her when she reached the valley floor, and he saw her run toward the castle in the starlight. When she reached it, she disappeared.

He had failed to take the castle seriously, assuming that it was nothing more than an oversized habitat the giant had built of sticks and stones to crawl into when it rained.

He had never dreamed it would turn out to be a stone edifice with three towers, encompassed by a stone enceinte.

Simmons, perhaps out of spite, hadn't vouchsafed a single word of description.

Always before when Harry Westwood had gone after bugaboos, he had studied the Planet Preparatory Team's report, but this time there had been no report because Feefifofum hadn't been invented till after the team left.

But if the castle mystified him, the presence of the girl mystified him even more.

Did she live with Feefifofum?

Or, like Jack, was she only hiding in the castle?

The brief glimpse he had had of her in the starlight before she ran away had revealed two startling facts: She was white and but little more than a child.

About ten families lived in the New Netherlands Land Company settlement. But Simmons had said nothing about someone's daughter having come up missing. Even if someone's daughter had, the giant's

castle would be about the last place in the world you'd expect to find her.

He knew he was getting nowhere, and gave up trying. He waited for a while to see whether the giant would come out of the castle, and when the giant didn't, he went back to his camp. After crawling into the tent with his rifle, he removed his knapsack and kicked off his boots and then activated the tent's force field. He was asleep in seconds. He should have dreamed of the giant, or if not the giant, the girl. But he dreamed of neither. Instead, he dreamed, as he often did, of the ogress who had bitten off his hand.

In the morning he found the grave.

It was only a short distance from where his camp had been. He came upon it after he packed his tent and campfire and started walking across the ridge.

It had not been dug very long ago. Only a few blades of grass had taken root in the turned earth. At the head of the grave, a small cross made out of branches had been pounded into the ground. At their point of intersection, they were fastened together with wire.

Upon the grave lay a small bouquet of pale blue wildflowers.

He knew that the girl must have placed it there. She must have been visiting the grave when he was ascending the slope. Upon hearing his footsteps, she had probably lain down in the tall grass so he couldn't see her. When night fell, she had crept close to his camp and watched him out of the darkness.

The grave served only to deepen the mystery of her presence. Again he dismissed it from his mind, and walked the rest of the way across the ridge. He didn't try to conceal himself when he came within sight of the castle; he wanted the giant to see him. The castle's three towers shimmered in the slanted morning sunlight. He saw that the enceinte, instead of being an encompassing wall, was part of the structure. In the stonework high above the ground, there were a number of narrow windows. The entrance, barred by a portcullis, didn't seem to be anywhere near large enough for a giant to get through.

Who in the hell had built the damned place? He refused to believe Feefifofum had. Having been created by the Bimbas, he couldn't possibly know any more about medieval castles than they did, and he couldn't have built one in any case.

Beyond the valley the twisted hills that precluded the mountains began. To the south the valley narrowed, and the slopes became tall cliffs overlooking the narrow stream that had cut them out of the earth and that ran moatlike past the castle's rear wall. To the north the valley grew in width, its far-apart slopes flanking the thousands and thousands of acres the New Netherlands Land Company planned to divide into lots.

The name of the game the company played was "Grab," and it played the game so well it made Columbus, who had been pretty good at it himself, look like a piker.

Harry Westwood relegated both his cynicism and the mystery of the castle to the back of his mind and started down the slope. If he didn't get busy and kill the giant, the Bimbas might beat him to it.

After he reached the valley floor, he approached the castle with bold strides, his rifle gripped in his right hand. It was his intention to flush Feefifofum out, since there was no way he could sneak into the castle. He stepped into the castle's long morning shadow. Considering the width of the structure, the shadow seemed awfully narrow. Any moment now, unless Feefifofum had come out and had gone on an early-morning constitutional, the portcullis would open and he would walk out the door, having espied Harry from one of the windows. And then, to Harry's consternation, he saw that the portcullis *was* open. At almost exactly the same moment, he saw Feefifofum.

He didn't ask himself how the giant could have come through the castle door without him seeing him, for the point was academic. He asked himself instead how the giant could have come through the door at all, for he was as tall as the castle was high.

He took a step toward Harry. Another. The ground should have trembled. It did not. The giant's stance was like that of a wrestler. He was, in fact, built like a wrestler, with muscles bulging out all over the place, and for a crazy moment Harry wondered if Feefifofum wanted to wrestle *him*.

He looked up past the massive mighty torso at the clifflike face. It was a mean face. The eyes, which made Harry think of black billiard balls, were overhung by brows that looked like thickets. The enormous nose was almost flat. The great jaw was square, and the rims of the lips were parted in a mean smile that showed an array of white teeth reminiscent of piano keys. Since the giant was looking down at him (although he didn't seem to be seeing him), Harry could see his hair. It was crewcut and looked like a field of cornstalks.

He lowered his gaze. All Feefifofum had on was a pink loincloth. Harry found himself staring at the foot-long safety pin that held it in place.

He knew then why the castle's shadow was so narrow and why the towers had shimmered in the sunlight.

It was time for Feefifofum to speak. He did so. His voice came from everywhere in the valley, but it didn't come from his mouth, and, detracting, even further from the giant's reality, it was deep and husky as well as loud, and sounded like the voice of a confirmed whiskey drinker:

*Fee-fi-fo-fum,
I smell the blood of an Englishman,
Be he alive, or be he dead
I'll have his bones to grind my bread!*

Quickly, Harry Westwood slung his rifle and ran past Feefifofum's left foot (he could just as easily have run right through it) toward the castle. When he reached the enceinte, he kept right on running and ran right through it. He wasn't the least surprised to see the spaceship. A Jacob's ladder ran down from its outer lock-door to the ground. He was in luck: the lock-door was open. Probably the girl had opened it to air out the ship. Quick as scat, he climbed the ladder and stepped into the lock — just in time to see the girl running down the companionway, hoping to reach the door before he did so she could slam it in his face.

He beat her to the inner lock-door, too. She stamped her foot and glared at him. "I should have known I couldn't fool a Beowulf!" she said.

In the projection room, into which the girl reluctantly led him after they climbed the companionway to the second deck, he watched the "giant," which was all of ten inches tall, take another step on the square table that constituted its milieu. Cameras were trained upon the toy doll from all angles, and mirrors reflected its laser images into a projector that was attached to the edge of the table. A big convex viewscreen on the bulkhead showed the giant-sized hologram taking the step on the valley floor *in front* of the "castle."

"Better let it unwind," Harry West wood said, "or the first thing you know, it'll step off the table, and all the king's horses and all the king's men won't be able to put it back together again."

"You think you're smart, don't you?" the girl said. But she did as he suggested, and picked up the plastic doll and let it unwind. A tiny handle that protruded from between its shoulder blades went round and round and round as the spring uncoiled. When it stopped turning, she laid the doll on the table. "It was that darn safety pin that gave him away, wasn't it? The natives never noticed it, but I should have known you would. I should have pinned my hankie in the back so you wouldn't see it. Maybe you caught wise it was my hankie, too. I goofed up, too, when I played the whole tape. Always before, when the natives came nosing around, I only had him say, 'Fee-fi-fo-fum.' But you look like an Englishman, so today I couldn't resist playing the whole tape."

"You don't like Englishmen?"

"Of course I don't!"

She had a saucy face — bright blue eyes, freckles, a small mouth. Her red-gold hair tumbled to her shoulders. A colleen, if he had ever seen one. She was wearing a frayed white dress that had seen too many washings, and sneakers that long ago had seen their better day. He put her age at about twelve. "Are you English?" she asked.

"My great-grandfather was English, so part of me is."

"I knew it!"

"Is that your father's voice on the tape?"

She nodded. "We put loudspeakers all over the valley. We brought the doll and the projector with us, and an illusion-field generator so we could make the ship look like a castle. My father said the only way we could keep the Bimbas from capturing us and chopping off our heads was by scaring them out of their wits. My father maybe drank too much sometimes, but he was still as smart as a whip. He hated the English," she added.

After all these years. Harry Westwood sighed. "What's your name?" he asked.

"Cathleen."

"Mine's Harry. Is that your father's grave up on the ridge?"

She looked away for a moment. "Yes. I — I buried him there."

There were two bolted-down chairs in the room. He took off his knapsack and unslung his rifle and sat down on one of them. After a little while, Cathleen sat down on the other. "We knew that sooner or later a Beowulf would come," she said, "but we thought we'd be out of here by then. We would have been, too, but something happened to the converter and my father couldn't fix it, and since we knew we wouldn't be able to throw the ship into infraspace, which meant the trip back would take us umpteen hundred years, we didn't even bother to blast off. But we couldn't stay here, so we decided to cut across the valley of the Bimbas and make our way to the spaceport and try to book passage on a ship to Earth. But — but when we got to the top of the ridge, my father could hardly breathe. We stopped to rest. I — I thought he'd fallen to sleep from the way he was sitting there leaning against a tree, but his eyes were wide open — and when I touched him, he was cold. I — I buried him up there. It's a lot nicer up there than it is down here. I go up there afternoons and sit by the grave and listen to the wind and watch it bend down the grass."

"Did he have a bad heart?"

"Real bad."

"Then why in hell did he try to carry all the gold?"

The blandest expression he had ever seen settled upon her face. "Gold? What gold?"

"The gold you and he placer-mined. At least I figure you must have placer-mined it. Up there, probably, where the valley narrows, where the stream cuts through the cliffs."

"You're crazy. We came here on a vacation, is all."

"The last I knew," Harry Westwood said, "an ounce of gold was worth a small fortune on the interplanetary exchange, so since diamonds are as plentiful on the extra terrestrial worlds as gold is rare, and have lost their former value, gold is just about the only thing that would have been worth your father's while to come back here for. He was on the Planet Preparatory Team, wasn't he?"

Cathleen didn't say anything. She just sat there and looked at him. He was silent, too. He was thinking of the Terrible Turk. According to the legend, the Terrible Turk had made a lot of money wrestling in America. He converted all of it into gold; and when he went home, he carried the gold in a money belt around his waist. A storm came up, but rather than remove his money belt when the ship began to sink, the Terrible Turk sank with it to the bottom of the sea.

At length he said, "Did you lug all the gold back here, or did you hide it up on the ridge?"

Fully regaining her self-possession, she got up from her chair, placed her hands on her hips, and began dancing from side to side in front of him, singing, "Wouldn't you like to *know-o*? Wouldn't you like to *know-o*?"

"You've got to admit," Harry Westwood said, "that it poses something of a problem if you expect to take it with you when I take you back to Earth with me."

She stopped dancing and fixed him with spiteful eyes. "You're not taking me anywhere!"

"Suit yourself."

"You just want to get your hands on the gold, is all!"

"If that giant of yours hadn't been a phony and I could have gotten rid of him, I'd have gotten my usual bounty. But the way it worked out instead, I came all the way to God Bless for next to nothing. So

since it was you who lured me here, I figure you owe me fifty thousand stellars."

"You think I'm going to give you that much in *gold*?"

"Of course I don't. The way things stand, with my being part English and your being a member of the IRA, all you're going to give me is a hard time."

"There's no IRA anymore."

"There should be for people like you." He rested his rifle crossways on his lap. "I think you'd better wind Feefifofum back up and put him back into action." He pointed at the view-screen. "A whole bunch of people have come to see him."

Her gaze joined his. He counted fifteen Bimbas, then saw that there were hundreds more higher on the slope. Cathleen wound up the toy, but didn't yet set it back on the table. "I'll wait till I see the whites of their eyes," she said.

"You're going to have a lot of whites to see. The whole valley has been revving up for this since yesterday."

"The more the merrier. Feefifofum'll have fun scaring them away." Her sangfroid annoyed him. It was true they were in no real danger. She had closed the outer lock-door after he entered the ship, so even if the Bimbas caught wise to the "giant" and assailed the "castle," they'd never be able to get into the ship. But damn it! — girls, especially girls her age — were supposed to be afraid when there was even so much as a smell of danger!

"Last time when some of them got scared and ran up the hill, they ran so fast they turned into molasses," she said, aggravating him still further. "Like in a book I read once where the tiger ran around a tree so fast he turned into butter."

"Is that the only book you've ever read?"

Arms akimbo, she said, "It's *you* who's giving *me* a hard time!"

"Better put Feefifofum down before you drop him. And maybe you'd better begin projecting him. There're about a thousand Bimbas out there."

She set the toy doll on the table and faced it toward the slope, but she didn't yet let go of it or activate the cameras and the projector. No doubt she meant to make it clear to him that she made her own decisions in such matters.

There weren't quite a thousand Bimbas, but there were nearly that many. As they approached the "castle," they waved their spears above their heads and shouted. At least Harry assumed they were shouting, because their mouths were open, but the hull of the ship cut off the sound of their voices. Cathleen waited till the foremost group was halfway to the "castle" before she let go of Feefifofum and activated the cameras and the projector. "Go get 'em, Feefee!" she said, and the toy doll took a diminutive step forward; and the hologram, which had appeared in the viewscreen, a giant one.

"Throw your silly spears at him, you dimwits!" Cathleen cried. "Go on, throw your silly spears at him!"

But no spears were thrown, although many were dropped. Feefifofum took another diminutive step and another giant step forward. The white paint on the Bimbas' faces, meant to strike terror in the giant, advertised instead the terror they felt themselves. Most of them, never having seen the "giant" before, had probably had doubts that the creature existed; but they doubted no longer, and over their cookfires tonight they would talk of nothing else.

A thought zipped through Harry Westwood's mind. It was gone before he could grab it.

Cathleen turned on the recording of her father's voice and then turned it off a moment later, and although Harry hadn't heard a thing, he knew that "fee-fi-fo-fum!" had thundered forth from every loudspeaker in the valley.

"Molasses, see? — molasses!" Cathleen cried as the Bimbas began running en masse up the slope. "I'll bet you never saw molasses run uphill before, did you, Harry?"

"You're a cruel little bitch," Harry Westwood said.

She kept the viewscreen focused on the fleeing Bimbas till the last of them disappeared beyond the

top of the ridge, then she deactivated the cameras and the projector and picked up the toy doll and let it unwind. After she laid it back down again, he picked it up to get a better look at it. Its hair, which had looked like a field of cornstalks, amounted to no more than yellow fuzz. Its black billiard-ball eyes had shrunk to the size of BBs. The face, despite its smallness, looked no less mean than it had before. The doll was made of plastic and stuffed probably with cotton. The arms as well as the legs were articulate.

He laid the doll back down. "Why'd your father bring just you?" he asked Cathleen. "Why didn't he bring your mother, too?"

"He wanted her to come. But she stuck up her nose and said that if investing his life savings in a spaceship and chasing all the way back to God Bless on some fool errand was what he planned to do, she would walk out on him right then and there, and she did. All my father could afford, even after he sold everything he owned, including the house, was this beat-up tub, which the Space Navy had scrapped, but he said it was better than no ship at all. My mother got a court order so she could claim me — haven't any brothers or sisters, so maybe that was why she wanted me — and my father told me the choice was up to me: that I could go with him to God Bless, or I could go to her. So I went with him, because that way I wouldn't have to go to school; and I'd be so rich when I got back, nobody could ever make me. When I came up missing, my mother must have had a fit."

"So now your only problem," Harry Westwood said, "is how to get the gold out of here and back to Earth without the New Netherlands Land Company catching wise to the fact that you found it on their land."

"Oh, they'll find out all right, because you're going to tell them."

"I wouldn't so much as tell them the time of day."

"You — you wouldn't?"

"I don't like land companies. History is full of them. Take the Ferdinand-Isabella Land Company, for example. Columbus was their head honcho. Not only did he grab off the West Indies for them, he took possession of the natives, too. He would have grabbed off the whole continent that lay beyond, if he'd known it was there. Not to worry: successive land companies came along and grabbed that off. But the land companies of today have the old-timers beat forty different ways to Sunday. They're grabbing off the choicest parts of *whole* planets, and when the inhabitants happen to be in the way, they just move them out, the way this particular land company is going to move the Bimbas out, once they find out the giant is gone — which they will, because when I get back to Galactic Guidance headquarters, I've got to make out a report. But all I'm going to put in it is that there wasn't any giant to begin with, so you can see how much they're going to find out from *me*. It's too bad I'm part English," he went on, "because it just so happens that I've got an infraspace waiting for me at the God Bless spaceport, which would have made it a lead-pipe cinch for us to smuggle the gold off the planet. Not only that, since it's a GG ship, the Terran Orbital Custom Station would have waved us right on by."

He stood up, shouldered his knapsack into place, slung his rifle, and headed for the door. When he reached it, he found Cathleen blocking his way. "All right," she said, "you can help me."

"Well that's exceedingly kind of you."

She glared at him. "I suppose it's going to cost me fifty thousand stellars' worth of gold."

"I'm not making an extra trip; I'm just taking you back with me. So it won't cost you anything."

"But you've got to help me carry the gold. I can't carry it all the way to the spaceport by myself."

"I will help you, but I don't want any of it."

"But you said—"

"I said that about you owing me my bounty only to get back at you because you were bugging me. But there's one proviso: as soon as we reach Earth, I want you to call your mother."

"I was going to call her anyway."

"Good. Get ready, and let's go."

"Why don't you try to fix the converter first? If you can fix it, I can go straight to Earth right from here, and you won't have to bother with me."

"If your father couldn't fix it, I know I can't. So we've got to hike it. Where is the gold? Here in the ship or up on the ridge?"

"Up on the ridge."

"Get ready then, and we'll go get it."

"You wait here — I'm going to put some different clothes on."

She left the room and pounded up the companionway. She returned five minutes later wearing Levi's, a plaid shirt, and calf-high boots. The Levi's were worn thin at the knees, the shirt was frayed, and the boots were badly scuffed. He knew that these had been her placer-mining clothes.

She brought a knapsack with her, into which she had stuffed some of her things. She added the plastic "giant." "Hey, you don't need that," Harry Westwood said. "You can buy one just like it in any novelty store on Earth."

"But this one has sentimental value; besides which, it doesn't take up much space, so you can be sure, Harry that there's plenty of room for the gold I'm going to carry. There isn't all that much gold anyway. My father and I didn't find nearly as much as he thought we would."

"Well just so you found enough to make you rich."

She turned the illusion field off before they left the ship. She paused for a moment and looked back at it. "My father got cheated. It's just a big pile of junk. It's a wonder we ever made it here from Earth."

They climbed the slope. On the way she picked wildflowers and made a small bouquet, which she placed on her father's grave when they reached it. She pointed to a big oak-like tree about a dozen yards away. "The gold's in there — the trunk's hollow."

He found that she and her father had stored the gold in little leather bags much like those once used by the prospectors who long ago wandered the Sierras with their burros. There were eleven bags. He put eight of them into his knapsack, first dumping out its contents. He was able to cram everything back in. When he slipped it back onto his shoulders, he felt like the Terrible Turk.

Cathleen came over and put the other three bags into her knapsack. "I can carry more than that, Harry."

"No, you can't, because I'm not going to let you."

"Damn it!" she flared. "You're just as stubborn and just as overbearing as my father was. If he'd let me carry more of the gold, he'd still be alive today."

She returned to the grave and stood by it for a long time, and he saw that she was crying. Finally she said, "All right, Harry — let's go," and they began working their way down the slope into Xanadu.

After they reached the valley floor, they kept well within the fringe of the forest. The day rushed from midmorning to afternoon. He asked Cathleen if she'd like to stop for a bite to eat, but she said no. He wished she'd said yes — not because he was hungry, but because of the weight of the knapsack. Only when the forest began to turn gray with the approach of night did her footsteps begin to falter. All this while he had carried his rifle in his right hand, but they had seen no sign of any of the Bimbas. "Are we going to camp out, or are we going to walk all night till we get to the spaceport?" she asked.

"What do you think we'd better do?"

"I — I think maybe we'd better camp out."

"There's a native village up ahead. We'll wait till we get by it first."

They got their feet wet crossing the stream. He peered through the foliage at the village. Cathleen did, too. It was too dark to see the heads hanging from the arch of the gateway. The clamor of yesterday was only a memory; nevertheless, the village was abuzz, and dozens of cookfires could be seen. No doubt the stalwart warriors who had sought to challenge Feefifofum were well steeped in native beer by this time and were busy painting the "giant" in lurid colors. By morning he would be twice as big and twice as frightful and three times as ferocious as he had been at the time of the encounter.

A mile beyond the village, Harry led the way deep into the woods, lighting the way with a flashlight that he extricated from his knapsack, till at length they came to a clearing. He let his knapsack fall to the ground, where it landed with a dull thump. Cathleen wasted no time in divesting herself of hers. He got out the pneumo-tent and inserted the pneumo-cartridge and inflated it, and then he got out two thermo-pacs and two vac-pacs of coffee, handed one of each to her, and sat down on the ground.

She remained standing. "The campfire, Harry — aren't you going to light it?"

"There may be Bimbos in the woods."

"We're just going to sit here and eat in the dark?"

"Right."

"I'll bet you all my gold that all of the Bimbos by now are so stoned they can hardly walk."

"But we don't *need* a fire, Cathy."

"We do, too. My feet are wet, and so are yours."

He knew that the real reason she wanted him to light the fire was that for all her bravado, she was still a little kid. Whatever her reason, there was little point in prolonging the argument, so he got the campfire out of his knapsack, set it on the ground, and activated it. She sat down beside him then. He turned up the flames as high as they would go, and they took off their boots and socks and placed them near the fire.

After they finished eating, Cathleen asked out of a clear blue sky, "Are you married, Harry?"

"Of course not."

"You must have a girlfriend."

"I do, sort of."

"Is she a colleen?"

"No. You're the first colleen I've ever met."

"Some colleen I am."

He gave her a whimsical look. "Oh, I wouldn't say that. As a matter of fact, you remind me of a colleen I read about once in a book."

"I do?"

"The book was a collection of ancient epics. The title of the one with the beautiful colleen in it was 'The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel.' When King Eochaid Feidlech saw her on the fairgreen of Bri Leith, he was smitten: "On her head were two golden-yellow tresses, in each of which was a plait of four locks. The hue seemed like the flower of the iris in summer, or like red gold after the burnishing thereof. White as the snow of one night were the two hands, red as foxglove were the two clear-beautiful cheeks. Dark as the back of a stag-beetle the two eyebrows. Like a shower of pearls were the teeth in her head. Blue as a hyacinth were the eyes. Red as rowan-berries the lips. Very high, smooth, and soft-white the shoulders. 'Thou shalt have welcome,' King Eochaid Feidlech said to her, 'and for thee every other woman shall be left by me, and with thee alone will I live so long as thou hast honor.'"

"I remind you of *her*?"

"Sure thing." Harry Westwood lit a cigarette. "Her name was Etain."

"You're pulling my leg, Harry."

"No, I'm not."

"Did they get married?"

"First he gave her twenty-one cows."

"Twenty-one *cows*?"

"That was her bride-price. I guess they made out all right, although it doesn't say so in the book. When he died, he left one daughter named Etain after her mother, and she married Cormac, king of Ulaid. When she had only a daughter and no sons, Cormac walked out on her, and then at a later date he married her again and said his daughter should be killed. Following his orders, two slaves took her to a pit, intending to throw her in, but she smiled 'a laughing smile' at them, and they were so entranced that instead of throwing her into the pit, they took her into the calf shed of the cowherds of Etirscel, and afterward they brought her up and she became an excellent embroideress, and in the whole of Ireland there wasn't a king's daughter dearer than she."

"What a dumb book!"

"There's blood all over the pages as you go on."

"How come you read it? — you're not Irish."

"You don't have to be Irish to read a book about Ireland."

"Did you hear something just then, Harry? Sort of a rustling sound?"

"Probably some small animal."

"There! — I heard it again."

He heard the sound this time, too. He thought it came from behind him, but when he turned his head and looked, he saw only his and Cathleen's shadows, their knapsacks, and the tent. "Nothing to worry about," he said.

She had looked behind them, too. "Are both of us going to sleep in the tent, Harry?"

"No, just you. I've got a blanket in my knapsack, and I'm going to sleep out here."

"You'll freeze."

"No, I won't." He put out his cigarette. "Why don't you go to bed now, Cathy — you must be tired."

For once, she gave him no argument, but picked up her socks and boots. He put his on. Suddenly she gasped, and sat there as though turned to stone, staring across the fire. He followed her eyes. And there stood Feefifofum, all ten inches tall, looking through the flames at them with murder in its BB-like eyes.

"Harry — it must have got out of my knapsack! But how could it have? — I let the spring run down." And then she gasped. "Harry — *it's alive!*"

He had already grabbed his FolzHedir. He got to his feet. But there was no time to aim the gun; he used it instead as a baseball bat and batted Feefifofum off into the darkness when the homunculus sprang toward him across the flames. "For God's sake, Cathy," he said, "get into your hoots — quick!"

Moving slowly away from the fire, he played the beam of his flashlight over the dead leaves of the clearing to see where the homunculus had fallen. Cathleen, after slipping her sockless feet into her boots, stayed so close to him he could hear every breath she breathed in and out.

When he saw no sign of the homunculus, he said, "Maybe it got up and ran away."

"How could it have come to life, Harry? It's just a little doll my father bought in a toy store, made out of plastic and stuffed with cotton, and with a spring to wind it up by."

"That's all it *was*. But right now it's flesh and blood. Bugaboos incarnate are the product of the collective imaginations of primitive people like the Bimbas. They make up giants and trolls and dragons and what have you, and their mass belief that the creatures exist *makes* them exist. But in the present instance we had a hologram instead of a bugaboo, and up till today most of the Bimbas only half-believed the 'giant' was real. But today almost a thousand of them saw it, and they were so impressed by its seeming reality that right now it's probably the only subject under discussion in all of the villages in the whole valley; and the warriors who were part of the expedition are describing it again and again; and the drunker they get, the bigger and stronger Feefifofum becomes. But the bugaboo incarnate itself doesn't become bigger, it only becomes stronger; for instead of bringing the hologram to life, the Bimbas' mass belief brought its prototype to life, because the prototype had inanimate reality to begin with. I should have known that this would happen. Cathy, I should have been prepared. The thought did cross my mind, but it—"

"There it is, Harry — over there! Watch out! — it's coming for you."

The homunculus was hardly more than a blur in the beam of the flashlight as it streaked toward him across the forest floor. It wrapped its arms around his right leg and sank its teeth into his boot. The teeth missed his shin by no more than a micromillimeter.

It locked its tiny arms so tightly around his calf that the femoral artery was cut off, and his foot went numb.

He handed the flashlight to Cathleen. "Keep the beam on it and step back." She did so. This time he used his gun as a gun club, gripping it by the barrel and swinging it down from his shoulder. The flat side of the butt caught Feefifofum squarely, tore its arms loose from Harry's leg, and sent the homunculus tumbling off into the darkness.

Cathleen found it quickly with the flashlight beam. It got to its feet and spat out a small piece of Harry's boot that had been clenched in its teeth. The blow, which should have broken every bone in its body, had not even fazed it.

Harry was scared. It was one thing to kill a giant as big as a sequoia tree, but quite another to kill one

but little bigger than a mouse.

Before he could get off a shot at the homunculus, it attacked again. This time it leapt for Cathleen, its tiny face contorted in demonic hatred of all living things. This was the Bimbas' doings; they had magnified the hatred they had seen on the hologram's face and made mass murder their bugaboo's *raison d'être*.

It was clear to Harry Westwood that Feefifofum had leapt for Cathleen this time instead of him because the flashlight made her a bigger target. This must have been clear to her ahead of time, because instead of holding the flashlight in front of her, she held it to one side, so all she had to do was jerk her arm out of the way.

Again she found the homunculus with the beam. But Harry didn't try to get off a shot at it; instead, he dropped his rifle and seized the flashlight. Holding it before him in his left hand, he waited till Feefifofum leapt, and caught the homunculus in his right.

The homunculus writhed, straining every muscle in its body, but it couldn't quite break free. At length, its face grotesque with fury, it began ripping tiny chunks of flesh from his hand.

"Let got of it, Harry!" Cathleen cried. "Let go of it — it's tearing your hand to pieces!"

He shook his head. He knew what he had to do. He had known almost from the first. He walked over to the campfire, knelt down on one knee, and plunged the homunculus into the flames.

It began to scream. The screams sounded like the terrified squeaks of a mouse.

Cathleen screamed, too. "Harry, your hand is burning up!"

He let it burn.

He let Feefifofum burn.

The homunculus waved its arms and kicked — till its arms and legs burned off. It screamed and screamed and screamed — till its face turned black in the flames. The smell of its burning flesh filled the clearing.

Harry's hand went up in smoke till all that remained of it were the steel phalanges and metacarpus and melange of tiny wires.

At last he withdrew what was left of the homunculus from the fire and threw the tiny, unbreakable bones upon the ground. Cathleen was sobbing. He stood up and stepped over to where she stood. She wouldn't look at him. "The hand was prosthetic, Cathy. An ogress bit my real one off."

She went right on crying. It occurred to him then that Feefifofum must be the cause of her tears. Little girls often became attached to their dolls, and a little girl was all she was.

At long last she dried her tears. "Let's go home, Harry," she said. "Let's start right now. I don't want to sleep in the woods. I hate this awful place!"

He did, too. They broke camp, shouldered their knapsacks, and left.

Cathleen's mother had red-gold hair just like Cathy's, or perhaps it should be said instead that Cathy had red-gold hair just like hers. She was tall and thin and attractive, but her blue eyes said that what she had seen in the world thus far she didn't like.

She cried when she saw Cathleen, and they embraced, and the moment of doubt Harry Westwood had experienced blew away on the autumn wind.

He had already sent in his report to Galactic Guidance. He had kept his promise to Cathleen and said only that there had been no giant, and had made no mention of the gold.

He could hardly have claimed a bounty anyway on a giant ten inches tall.

It burned him, though, to have gone all the way to God Bless and back for next to nothing.

He carried Cathleen's knapsack out of his apartment, told her mother to open the trunk of her car, and heaved the knapsack inside. The rear end of the car sagged.

Cathleen had told him she hadn't said a word about the gold when she phoned her mother last night because she hadn't dared to because it was contraband. But she'd said she told her mother about how he brought her home in his ship. So he figured that at the least he rated a big thank-you. But he didn't get it. Instead, her mother kept glancing at the bandage he'd wrapped around what was left of his right hand, and said nothing to him at all.

Cathleen must have told her he was part English.

She got behind the wheel of the car, and he closed the trunk. Cathleen lingered by the passenger-side door. She hadn't said much during the trip back, and she had been mum almost all day. The afternoon wind rippled the skirt of her frayed white dress and lifted the locks of her hair, and her hair was the same color as the falling red-gold leaves. "Harry?" she said.

He went over to where she stood, half-expecting her to take a parting shot at him. "I — I guess I should thank you for bringing me back," she said.

Harry guessed she should, too. He said, "You're welcome."

She started to climb into the car, then stopped. She looked at him. "Do you know what I wish, Harry? I wish that I were eight years older and that you were giving *me* twenty-one cows."

For a long while he couldn't speak, and then he said, "If you were eight years older, I probably would — provided it would be all right with you."

"Oh, it would be, Harry. It would, it would, it would."

Two pearls of dew gathered in her hyacinth-eyes and ran down her cheeks. She leaned up and put her arms around his neck and kissed him. Then she climbed into the front seat beside her mother, and the car drove away.

It wasn't until he opened his refrigerator to get a can of beer, long after they were gone, that he found the two bags of gold.