And came down in Paris:

Where we raced along the Rue de Medicis with Bo and . Lou and Muse inside the fence, Kelly and me outside, making faces through the bars, making noise, making the Luxem-bourg Gardens roar at two in the morning. Then climbed out, and down to the square in front of St. Sulpice where Bo tried to knock me into the fountain.

At which point Kelly noticed what was going on around us, got an ashcan cover, and ran into the pissoir, banging the walls. Five guys scooted out; even a big pissoir only holds four.

A very blond young man put his hand on my arm and smiled. “Don’t you think, Spacer, that you … people should leave?”

I looked at his hand on my blue uniform. “Est-ce que tu es an frelk?”

His eyebrows rose, then he shook his head. “Une frelk,”

he corrected. “No. I am not. Sadly for me. You look as though you may once have been a man. But now …” He smiled. “You have nothing for me now. The police.” He nodded across the street where I noticed the gendarmerie for the first time. “They don’t bother us. You are strangers, though…”

But Muse was already yelling, “Hey, come on! Let’s get out of here, hub?” And left. And went up again.

And came down in Houston:

“God damn!” Muse said. “Gemini Flight Controlyou mean this is where it all started? Let’s get out of here, pleasel”

So took a bus out through Pasadeaa, then the monoline to Galveston, and were going to take it down the Gulf, but Lou found a couple with a pickup truck “Glad to give you a ride. Spacers. You people up there on them planets and things, doing all that good work for the government.”

who were going south, them and the baby, so we rode in the back for two hundred and fifty miles of sun and wind.

“You think they’re frelks?” Lou asked, elbowing me. “I bet they’re frelks. They’re just waiting for us to give ‘cm the come-on.”

“Cut it out. They’re a nice, stupid pair of country kids.”

“That don’t mean they ain’t frelksl”

“You don’t trust anybody, do you?”

“No.”

And finally a bus again that rattled us through Brownsville and across the border into Matamoros where we staggered down the steps into the dust and the scorched evening with a lot of Mexicans and chickens and Texas Gulf shrimp fishermenwho smelled worstand we shouted the loudest.

Forty-three whores1 countedhad turned out for the shrimp fishermen, and by the time we had broken two of the windows in the bus station they were all laughing. The shrimp fishermen said they wouldn’t buy us no food but would get us drunk if we wanted, ‘cause that was the custom with shrimp fishermen. But we yelled, broke another window; then while I was lying on my back on the telegraph office steps, singing, a woman with dark lips bent over and put her hands on my cheeks. “You are very sweet.” Her rough hair fell forward. “But the men, they are standing around and watching you. And that is taking up time. Sadly, their time is our money. Spacer, do you not think you …

people should leave?”

I grabbed her wrist. “fUstedl” I whispered. “jUsted es una frelka?”

“Frelko in espanol.” She smiled and patted the sunburst that hung from my belt buckle. “Sorry. But you have nothing that … would be useful to me. It is too bad, for you look like you were once a woman, no? And I like women, too….”

I rolled off the porch.

“Is this a drag, or is this a drag!” Muse was shouting.

“Come on! Let’s go!”

We managed to get back to Houston before dawn, some-how. And went up.

And came down in Istanbul: That morning it rained in Istanbul.

At the commissary we drank our tea from pear-shaped glasses, looking out across the Bosphorus. The Princes Islands lay like trash heaps before the prickly city.

“Who knows their way in this town?” Kelly asked.

“Aren’t we going around together?” Muse demanded. “I thought we were going around together.”

“They held up my check at the purser’s office,” Kelly explained. “I’m flat broke. I think the purser’s got it m for me,” and shrugged. “Don’t want to, but I’m going to have to hunt up a rich frelk and come on friendly,” went back to the tea; then noticed how heavy the silence had become. “Aw, come on, now! You gape at me like that and I’ll bust every bone in that carefully-conditioned-from-puberty body of yours. Hey you!” meaning me. “Don’t give me that holier-than-thou gawk like you never went with no frelk!”

It was starting.

“I’m not gawking,” I said and got quietly mad.

The longing, the old longing.

Bo laughed to break tensions. “Say, last time I was in Istanbulabout a year before I joined up with this platoon.

1 remember we were coming out of Taksim Square down Istiqlal. Just past all the cheap movies we found a little passage lined with flowers. Ahead of us were two other spacers. It’s a market in there, and farther down they got fish,, and then a courtyard with oranges and candy and sea urchins and cabbage. But flowers in front. Anyway, we noticed something funny about the spacers. It wasn’t their uniforms: they were perfect. The haircuts: fine. It wasn’t till we heard them talkingThey were a man and woman dressed up like spacers, trying to pick up frelks! Imagine, queer for frelks!”

“Yeah,” Lou said. “I seen that before. There were a lot of them in Rio.”

“We beat hell out of them two,” Bo concluded. “We got them in a side street and went to town!”

Muse’s tea glass clicked on the counter. “From Taksim down Istiqlal till you get to the flowers? Now why didn’t you say that’s where the frelks were, hub?” A smile on Kelly’s face would have made that okay. There was no smile.

“Hell,” Lou said, “nobody ever had to tell me where to look. I go out in the street and

frelks smell me coming. I can spot ‘&m halfway along PiccadiUy. Don’t they have nothing but tea in this place? Where can you get a drink?”

Bo grinned. “Moslem country, remember? But down at .the end of the Flower Passage there’re a lot of little bars with green doors and marble counters where you can get a liter of beer for about fifteen cents in lira. And there’re all these stands selling deep-fat-fried bugs and pig’s gut sandwiches”

“You ever notice how frelks can put it away? I mean liquor, not … pig’s guts.”

And launched off into a lot of appeasing stories. We ended with the one about the frelk some spacer tried to roll who announced: “There are two things I go for. One is spacers; the other is a good fight… .”

But they orily allay. They cure nothing. Even Muse knew we would spend the day apart, now.

The rain had stopped, so we took the ferry up the Golden Horn. Kelly straight off asked for Taksim Square and Istiqlal and was directed to a dolmush, which we discovered was a taxicab, only it just goes one place and picks up lots and lots of people on the way. And it’s cheap.

Lou headed off over Ataturk Bridge to see the sights of New City. Bo decided to find out what the Dolma Boche really was; and when Muse discovered you could go to Asia for fifteen centsone lira and fifty krushwell, Muse decided to go to Asia.

I turned through the confusion of traffic at the head of the bridge and up past the gray, dripping walls of Old City, beneath the trolley wires. There are times when yelling and belling won’t fill the lack. There are times when you must walk by yourself because it hurts so much to be alone.

I walked up a lot of little streets with wet donkeys and wet camels and women in veils; and down a lot of big streets with buses and trash baskets and men in business suits.

Some people stare at spacers; some people don’t. Some people stare or don’t stare in a way a spacer gets to recog-nize within a week after coming out of training school at sixteen. I was waiting in the park when I caught her watching. She saw me see and looked away.

I ambled down the wet asphalt. She was standing under the arch of a ‘small, empty mosque shell. As I passed she walked out into the courtyard among the cannons.

“Excuse me.”

I stopped.

“Do you know whether or not this is the shrine of St.

Irene?” Her English was charmingly accented. “I’ve left my guidebook home.”

“Sorry. I’m a tourist too.”

“Oh.” She smiled. “I am Greek. I thought you might be Turkish because you are so dark.”

“American red Indian.” I nodded. Her turn to curtsy.

“I see. I have just started at the university here in Istanbul. Your uniform, it tells me that you are”and in the pause, all speculations resolved”a spacer.”

I was uncomfortable. “Yeah.” I put my hands in my pockets, moved my feet around on the soles of my boots, licked my third from the rear left molardid all the things you do when you’re uncomfortable. You’re so exciting -when you look like that, a frelk told me once. “Yeah, I am.” I said it too sharply, too loudly, and she jumped a little.

So now she knew I knew she knew I knew, and I wondered how we would play out the Proust bit.

“I’m Turkish,” she said. “I’m not Greek. I’m not just starting. I’m a graduate in art history here at the university.

These little lies one makes for strangers to protect one’s ego … why? Sometimes I think my ego is very small.”

That’s one strategy.

“How far away do you live?” I asked. “And what’s the going rate in Turkish lira?” That’s another.

“I can’t pay you.” She pulled her raincoat around her hips. She was very pretty. “I would like to.” She shrugged and smiled. “But I am … a poor student. Not a rich one.

If you want to turn around and walk away, there will be no hard feelings. I shall be sad though.”

I stayed on the path. I thought she’d suggest a price after a little while. She didn’t.

And that’s another.

I was asking myself. What do you want the damn money for anyway? when a breeze upset water from one of the park's great cypresses.

"I think the whole business is sad." She wiped drops from her face. There had been a break in her voice-and for a moment I looked too closely at the water streaks. "I think it's sad that they have to alter you to make you a spacer. If they hadn't, then we … If spacers had never been, then we could not be … the way we are. Did you start out male or female?"

Another shower. I was looking at the ground and droplets went down my collar.

"Male," I said. "It doesn't matter."

"How old are you? Twenty-three, twenty-four?"

"Twenty-three," I lied. It's reflex. I'm twenty-five, but the younger they think you are, the more they pay you. But I didn't want her damn money "I guessed right then." She nodded. "Most of us are ex-perts on spacers. Do you find that? I suppose we have to be." She looked at me with wide black eyes. At the end of the stare, she biinked rapidly. "You would have been a fine man. But now you are a spacer, building water-conservation units on Mars, programing mining computers on Ganymede, servicing communication relay towers on the moon. The alteration …" Frelks are the only people I've ever heard say "the alteration" with so much fascination and regret.

"You'd think they'd have found some other solution. They could have found another way than neutering you, turning you into creatures not even androgynous; things that are"

I put my hand on her shoulder, and she stopped like I'd hit her. She looked to see if anyone was near. Lightly, so lightly then, she raised her hand to mine.

I pulled my hand away. "That are what?"

"They could have found another way." Both hands in her pockets now.

"They could have. Yes. Up beyond the ionosphere, baby, there's too much radiation for those precious gonads to work right anywhere you might want to do something that would keep you there over twenty-four hours, like the moon, or Mars, or the satellites of Jupiter"

"They could have made protective shields. They could have done more research into biological adjustment"

“Population Explosion time,” I said. “No, they were hunt-ing for any excuse to cut down kids back thenespecially deformed ones.”

“Ah yes.” She nodded. “We’re still fighting our way up from the neo-puritan reaction to the sex freedom of the twentieth century.”

“It was a fine solution.” I grinned and grabbed my crotch.

“I’m happy with it.” I’ve never known why that’s so much more obscene when a spacer does it.

“Stop it,” she snapped, moving away.

“What’s the matter?”

“Stop it,” she repeated. “Don’t do that! You’re a child.”

“But they choose us from children whose sexual responses are hopelessly retarded at puberty.”

“And your childish, violent substitutes for love? I suppose that’s one of the things that’s attractive. Yes, I know you’re a child.”

“Yeah? What about frelks?”

She thought awhile. “I think they are the sexually retarded ones they miss. Perhaps it was the right solution. You really don’t regret you have no sex?”

“We’ve got you,” I said.

“Yes.” She looked down. I glanced to see the expression she was hiding. It was a smile. “You have your glorious, soaring life, and you have us.” Her face came up. She glowed. “You spin in the sky, the world spins under you, and you step from land to land, while we …” She turned her head right, left, and her black hair curled and uncurled on the shoulder of her coat. “We have our dull, circled lives, bound in gravity, worshiping you!”

She looked back at me. “Perverted, yes? In love with a bunch of corpses in free fall!” She suddenly hunched her shoulders. “I don’t like having a free-fall-sexual-displacement complex.”

“That always sounded like too much to say.”

She looked away. “I don’t like being a frelk. Better?”

“I wouldn’t like it either. Be something else.”

“You don’t choose your perversions. You have no perversions at all. You’re free of the whole business. I love you for that, spacer. My love starts with the fear of love. Isn’t that beautiful? A pervert substitutes something unattainable for ‘normal’ love: the homosexual, a mirror, the fetishist, a shoe or a watch or a girdle. Those with free-fall-sexual-dis”

“Frelks.”

“Frelks substitute”-abe looked at me sharply again “loose, swinging meat.”

“That doesn’t offend me.”

“I wanted it to.”

“Why?”

“You don’t have desires. You wouldn’t understand.”

“Go on.”

“I want you because you can’t want me. That’s the pleasure. If someone really had a sexual reaction to … us, we’d be scared away. I wonder how many people there were before there were you, waiting for your creation. We’re necrophiles. I’m sure grave robbing has fallen off since you started going up. But you don’t understand… .” She paused.

“If you did, then I wouldn’t be scuffing leaves now and trying to think from whom I could borrow sixty lira.” She stepped over the knuckles of a root that had cracked the pavement. “And that, incidentally, is the going rate in Istanbul.”

I calculated. “Things still get cheaper as you go east.”

“You know,” and she let her raincoat fall open, “you’re different from the others. You at least want to know”

I said, “If I spat on you for every time you’d said that to a spacer, you’d drown.”

“Go back to the moon, loose meat.” She closed her eyes.

“Swing on up to Mars. There are satellites around Jupiter where you might do some good. Go up and come down in some other city.”

“Where do you live?”

“You want to come with me?”

“Give me something,” I said. “Give me somethingit doesn’t have to be worth sixty lira. Give me something that you like, anything of yours that means something to you.”

“No!”

“Why not?”

“Because I”

“don’t want to give up part of that ego. None of you frelks do!”

“You really don’t understand I just don’t want to buy you?”

“You have nothing to buy me with.”

“You are a child,” she said. “I love you.”

We reached the gate of the park. She stopped, and we stood time enough for a breeze to rise and die in the grass.

“I …” she offered tentatively, pointing without taking her hand from her coat pocket. “I live right down there.”

“All right,” I said. “Let’s go.”

A gas main had once exploded along this street, she explained to me, a gushing road of fire as far as the docks, overhot and overquick. It had been put out within minutes, no building had fallen, but the charred facias glittered. “This is sort of an artist and student quarter.” We crossed the cobbles. “Yuri Pasha, number fourteen. In case you’re ever in Istanbul again.” Her door was covered with black scales, the gutter was thick with garbage.

“A lot of artists and professional people are frelks,” I said, trying to be inane.

“So are lots of other people.” She walked inside and held the door. “We’re just more flamboyant about it.”

On the landing there was a portrait of Ataturk. Her room was on the second floor. “Just a moment while I get my key”

Marsscapes! Moonscapes! On her easel was a six-foot can-vas showing the sunrise flaring on a crater's rim! There were copies of the original Observer pictures of the moon pinned to the wall, and pictures of every smooth-faced general in the International Spacer Corps.

On one corner of her desk was a pile of those photo magazines about spacers that you can find in most kiosks all over the world: I've seriously heard people say they were printed for adventurous-minded high school children. They've never seen the Danish ones. She had a few of those too.

There was a shelf of art books, art history texts. Above them were six feet of cheap paper-covered space operas: Sin on Space Station #12, Rocket, Rake, Savage Orbit.

"Arrack?" she asked. "Ouzo or pemod? You've got your choice. But I may pour them all from the same bottle." She set out glasses on the desk, then opened a waist-high cabinet that turned out to be an icebox. She stood up with a tray of lovelies: fruit puddings, Turkish delight, braised meats.

"What's this?"

"Dolmades. Grape leaves filled with rice and pignolias."

"Say it again?"

"Dolmades. Comes from the same Turkish word as 'dolmush.' They both mean 'stuffed.' " She put the tray beside the glasses. "Sit down."

I sat on the studiocOuch-that-becomes-bed. Under the brocade I felt the deep, fluid resilience of a glycogd mattress.

They've got the idea that it approximates the feeling of free fall. "Comfortable? Would you excuse me for a moment? I have some friends down the hall. I want to see them for a moment." She winked. "They like spacers."

"Are you going to take up a collection for me?" I asked.

"Or do you want them to line up outside the door and wait their turn?"

She sucked a breath. "Actually I was going to suggest both." Suddenly she shook her head. "Oh, what do you want!"

"What will you give me? I want something," I said. "That's why I came. I'm lonely. Maybe I want to find out how far it goes. I don't know yet."

“It goes as far as you will. Me? I study, I read, paint, talk with my friends”she came over to the bed, sat down on the floor”go to the theater, look at spacers who pass me on the street, till one looks back; I am lonely too.” She put her head on my knee. “I want something. But,” and after a minute neither of us had moved, “you are not the one who will give it to me.”

“You’re not going to pay me for it,” I countered. “You’re not, are you?”

On my knee her head shook. After a while she said, all breath and no voice. “Don’t you think you . , . should leave?”

“Okay,” I said, and stood up.

She sat back on the hem of her coat. She hadn’t taken it off yet.

I went to the door.

“Incidentally.” She folded her hands in her lap. “There is a place in New City you might find what you’re looking for, called the Flower Passage”

I turned toward her, angry. “The frelk hangout? Look, I don’t need money! I said anything would do! I don’t want”

She had begun to shake her head, laughing quietly. Now she lay her cheek on the wrinkled place where I had sat.

“Do you persist in misunderstanding? It is a spacer hangout.

When you leave, I am -going to visit my friends and talk about … ah, yes, the beautiful one that got away. I thought you might find … perhaps someone you know.”

With anger, it ended.

“Oh,” I said. “Oh, it’s a spacer hangout. Yeah. Well, thanks.”

And went out. And found the Flower Passage, and Kelly and Lou and Bo and Muse. Kelly was buying beer so we all got drunk, and ate fried fish and fried clams and fried sau-sage, and Kelly was waving the money around, saying, “You should have seen him! The changes I put that frelk through, you should have seen him! Eighty lira is the going rate here, and he gave me a hundred and fifty!” and drank more beer.

And went up.