

DISCUSSION OF A CASE

1964

David S. Cole
1964

CHARACTERS

The Neurologist

The Visitor

Leopoldine

The scene is a room in London in the South Atlantic

(Scene: The main room of a weather-station on a remote South Atlantic island. The station is built up on a low, billowing, dark-grey rock which runs across the stage. Each of the three walls of the room is not continuous, but composed of a broken line of wide, gun-metal grey panels, at irregular angles to each other with several inches between, open to wind and weather, appearing thus (from above):



There is an outside door in one of the panels of the up-stage "wall", and another, leading to an (off-stage) verandah, in one of the panels of the stage-left "wall".

On stands and tables around the room are various weather-forecasting instruments which would usually be installed outdoors: rain-gauge, wind-vane, anemometer, etc. - all fancy, as if for display: varnished wood, polished brass - absolutely unweatherbeaten. Also on a table in a prominent position is a beat-up radio transmitter-receiver with a desk microphone and loudspeaker.

There is something vaguely monastic about the room; for instance, what appears to be a crucifix hanging on one wall is only on closer inspection seen to be a spring-barometer. . .

Before rise, the bell of the radio begins to ring like a telephone; at rise, it is still ringing, and a red light on the receiver panel is flashing. The ringing and flashing continue to the point where the audience is beginning to wonder if a cue has been missed. At this moment, PETERFIRE bursts into the room through the verandah door and seizes the microphone.)

PETERFIRE

(into microphone)

Whoever this is, know that it was not I! You can't say so; at most you have that clock to point to, a fire or not - but where am I! And if rain drove that fire back in the earth again - that doesn't alter it: where am I? Ships were set upon by storm and saved in the light, and some not - but where am I, I can still ask it.

(The METEOROLOGIST enters through the outside door, stops in the doorway when he sees PETERFIRE at the microphone.)

A snip and a father down, a flame off: Place Peterfire there!

METEOROLOGIST

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I thought we were done with that.

(PETERFIRE, startled, drops microphone, turns to him.)

I see we're not.

(PETERFIRE makes as if to leave.)

Stay, Peter: what could have exhausted my pity?

(PETERFIRE slumps into a chair facing away from the METEOROLOGIST.)

And yet, what is there I can do?

(half to himself)

I could take relief from that question: that there should still be a sphere I can ask that question in...

PETERFIRE

Where are you coming from?

METEOROLOGIST

The headland.

PETERFIRE

I have a fire there.

METEOROLOGIST

You have your fire here, Peter. The gas from my generator is supposed to be burning out the memory of your father's beacon.

(suddenly remembering)

Hey, what about that gas-jet, Peter? It's not like you to let me catch you away.

PETERFIRE

(runs to METEOROLOGIST and grasps him by the arms)

It hasn't gone down?

METEOROLOGIST

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(touched and repelled)

When I produce this in you...

PETERFIRE

After all the kindness, Doctor, don't now be the one who tells me -

METEOROLOGIST

There's a good three inches of fuel above the scratch in the tube.

(PETERFIRE looks at him uncomprehendingly.)

We're all right - he said, not bothering to listen for the irony any more.

PETERFIRE

(suddenly assuming confidence)

Yes, I had thought so; there was about three inches when I was just there, you see, so I stepped out a minute. But I don't think on the whole I'm ever going to let it happen again.

METEOROLOGIST

All right, Peter; you've never had to be so convincing. I just ask you in a general sort of way to keep my generator burning. I have to have it ready, yes; but so long as it can always be got ready - good enough, I don't want to replace one fetish with another. I mean, if the flame goes off for a minute, you can just snap it back on again, can't you?

PETERFIRE

Peterfire keeps the responsibility of his flame BURNING!

METEOROLOGIST

Please don't give your opinions in the third person, Peter, as if you were a local character. It reminds me of your father.

PETERFIRE

Oh, I heaped the fire for his beacon! When it started to sink, I threw in my passions: one, then another...

METEOROLOGIST

Or meant to, Peter; I'm quite sure you did. Maybe surer than Peterfire.

PETERFIRE

Look, god knows there are reasons I shouldn't be hounding you or pressing you - but to be so "sure" of me - and then flying off to check that flame every five minutes... what doesn't mean to trust Peterfire?

METEOROLOGIST

You know, there is always the truth about me. Nobody else knows it -

PETERFIRE

(with a sigh)

Oh, my Doctor.

METEOROLOGIST

- but you know it. All right, then, apply what you know! Put it to use! Am I the likely man to scuttle a world's cares and get on with Peterfire? Nice cold glass of simplicity to set before a steaming mind! You show me an image I can only envy; it's a wrong image. I don't log the fortunes of your flame, Peter; I just happened to see the generator on the verandah.

PETERFIRE

I mean the flame on the headland, my father's beacon. Why are you always out there checking it?

METEOROLOGIST

Ah, that still? You'll have me thinking I should have let the

Dolomite put in their

(mock-pompous)

"self-restoring electrical flash" after all.

PETERFIRE

Never! - or I push off from here, I take my trouble onto the ocean.

METEOROLOGIST

no, you're right; their idea of an improvement isn't ever very satisfactory - he said, making the appropriate application.

PETERFIRE

Yes, but you say it because if the Dolomite took away my flame to check, what would there be to check?

METEOROLOGIST

Peter, you know more about me than that!

PETERFIRE

You were on the headland - come on, doctor, this tires me.

METEOROLOGIST

And with a terrible reason to be there! I never thought to look at your beacon, I certainly wasn't there to look at it.

PETERFIRE

Then why there?

METEOROLOGIST

And don't be telegraphic, what are you saving the words for? I had to be on the headland; I'm at the stage where a boat had better come in.

PETERFIRE

Boatload of drowned judges.

METEOROLOGIST

(startled; sharply)

why judges? whom to judge?

PETERFIRE

Blair-eyed Peterfire.

METEOROLOGIST

(recovering; with elaborate irony)

Oh, you're such a significant criminal, Peter. Assizes are floating around the world after you.

PETERFIRE

It's funny -

METEOROLOGIST

I wonder if it's safe being on the same island.

PETERFIRE

It's funny to get mocked for self-importance by the endlessly important Self.

METEOROLOGIST

but self-important, Peter? That can't really be your word for it?

PETERFIRE

Do you trust my gratitude enough to let me be so honest?

METEOROLOGIST

Is it as if I gloried?

PETERFIRE

But you're interested. Very. The knack, the thing they can do...

Oh, these masters!

METEOROLOGIST

This man discovers a needle-gun going off in his hand and suddenly

ballistics becomes an absorption.

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PETERFIRE

Not it. I'd like to be able to tell you that's it...

(pause)

No, I wouldn't.

METEOROLOGIST

There you're right. What's ever happened for me to take the words from? If I try expression in any terms, responsibility itself swoops down and takes the words away.

(thunder at a very great distance)

Das ewige Wedder! moisture, light and roaring.

(thunder again)

I think it's going to rain. Ha! ha! That's like a conqueror saying, "I think there's going to be some famine here," as he puts the torch to the grain,

(thunder again; a little louder)

as he watches the first snows go,

(thunder again; louder still)

as he records the turning black of the last green in the field,

(still louder thunder)

as he warns, from red sky at an incredible distance, how fast corn burns,

(METEOROLOGIST seems to wait a moment for another burst, which does not come; then he goes on)

as he turns around in all his own smoke.

(deafening clap of thunder; sound of torrential rain)

PETERFIRE

(screaming over the thunder)

rather!

(he throws himself like a child into the METEOROLO=

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GIST's arms.)

METEOROLOGIST

Right, Peter, right: no self-absorption. Neither of us ever yet talked about himself but he was telling about the other.

(PETERFIRE breaks away from the METEOROLOGIST with revulsion. Pause. Rain continues.)

METEOROLOGIST

(assentily)

I wish it would clear.

(Pause. Rain continues.)

I wish it to clear - he said, bethinking himself.

(Rain stops at once. A stylized pattern of sunbeams strikes the stage - and then fades so suddenly that the audience almost doubts its having been there at all. The color of the sky at once returns to a non-committal grey, as at opening.)

I'd better get into my routine. Or maybe I should say, get a little deeper into my routine. Be ready, Peter; I've got this new attachment. You'll be called when I'm ready to show you how to work it.

(METEOROLOGIST starts to exit through door to veranda. PETERFIRE moves toward the microphone. METEOROLOGIST turns back.)

But stay away from that microphone, will you? It's pitiful, when you know it's broken...

(Exit METEOROLOGIST. PETERFIRE waits a minute to be sure he is gone; then pounds back to the radio and takes up the microphone as if all this time he could hardly wait to get his hands on it.)

PETERFIRE

(into microphone)

But for all that, keep at your receivers. You need to hear more; I feel the mistrust humming around the snattered coils of this equipment. Only now - get out of here with your silence, you whose faces I cannot begin to imagine.

(The outer door swings open as if of its own accord; the VISITOR is standing there in a monkish grey robe. He carries a shiny attaché case.)

VISITOR

(raising one arm as if in the Nazi salute, but palm upward)

"Rest assured!"

PETERFIRE

(drops the microphone, startled; turns toward door)

Why are you talking to me like that?

VISITOR

I speak as a Dolomite upon entering a house.

PETERFIRE

A Dolomite!

VISITOR

The Legate-Inspector for Dolomite Assurance in South Atlantic waters.

(touches his chest and bows)

PETERFIRE

But a Dolomite?

VISITOR

would have to be, not?

PETERFIRE

(falls to his knees)

Give judgment!

VISITOR

I am sent to the Doctor.

PETERFIRE

Judgment!

VISITOR

Could the Doctor be brought, please?

PETERFIRE

(Gets up)

He's in twisting the threads of fate.

This may make all the difference to some of us here... I'm Peterfire: knowing the Doctor involves knowing me.

VISITOR

Can't I have the Doctor? I couldn't seem to get an answer over the ship's radio. . .

PETERFIRE

Oh, was that you on the radio? I'm sorry, I got to the set much too late, I'm sorry. You came in by boat?

VISITOR

The Dolomite Visitation Craft Soterioo. They're off the south of the island now, waiting, which is what makes me in a little of a hurry, you see -

PETERFIRE

Funny the Doctor didn't see you, then. He was planted on the head-land.

VISITOR

we came in under fog -

PETERFIRE

(sharply)

which cuts down the visibility - I know; you don't have to lecture me, I know a little weather.

(goes over to the VISITOR and runs a fold of the VISITOR's robe through his fingers)

You really do wear your grey robes. I thought, you know, it was

just an expression, "Dolomite on a Grey Visit".

VISITOR

No, it's more than an expression. Will the Doctor be here soon?

PETERFIRE

No, I think he means to keep at it.

VISITOR

Perhaps if he could be told his Dolomite superior -

PETERFIRE

Do you have to wear it, like a uniform?

VISITOR

Well, I thought so; but evidently there's nothing in the Codex, and one day when I asked my Dolomite Master about it, he showed genuine surprise, he said, "Do we all wear grey robes?" and upon my drawing him to the window to show the hundreds of Dolomites working their plots or exercising in the yard, he exclaimed, "Well! If that isn't something! Grey robes all around!"

Though whether I'm supposed to be telling all this...

PETERFIRE

You won't get a better opportunity - someone with glass cases ready for your words. Every fact of Dolomite life, turn of Dolomite thought, judges me.

VISITOR

That's going to have to be seen into, isn't it? But just at this minute, if I could be furnished with the Doctor -

PETERFIRE

Really, it wouldn't do you any good: you have to be prepared in me.

VISITOR

You're close?

PETERFIRE

You try and distinguish.

VISITOR

Why should that be?

PETERFIRE

It shouldn't be. Are you ready?

VISITOR

For... ?

PETERFIRE

Information.

VISITOR

I am a Dolomite!

PETERFIRE

And my born judges. That means you always are.

VISITOR

Are...?

PETERFIRE

Ready.

VISITOR

For... ?

PETERFIRE

To be informed.

VISITOR

Always.

PETERFIRE

But because every word I speak with Dolomites is a pica, this can make it my turn to wonder: how much telling?

VISITOR

Generous. What is a Dolomite decision but the quintessence of much fine information? And what gives the justice? The fulness. Which all makes it a joy to -

PETERFIRE

wait, what's this about a decision? You have to make what decision?

VISITOR

Could you know - then still say what you were about to?

PETERFIRE

Concerns the Doctor, then?

VISITOR

(Hous)

The Doctor.

PETERFIRE

Don't harm him, I'm too close.

VISITOR

On such a grounds?

PETERFIRE

Oh, grounds! He saved my mind. What are you grey figures planning?

VISITOR

A proposal drifted down the council table that we might shut this station.

PETERFIRE

(Involuntarily)

Before I have him -

(catches himself)

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VISITOR

ies?

PETERFIRE

Why do you want to do this?

VISITOR

Because Dolomite employs island weather stations as a means of fixing the premium-rates on Dolomite-insured ships. But no Dolomite-insured ship ever visits this remote corner of the South Atlantic.

PETERFIRE

But that's not so. There are boats you insure here.

VISITOR

Excuse me -

PETERFIRE

That was just the reason they wanted to put in an electric beacon afterwards (to the shame of Peterfire) - because of having to pay out on my father.

VISITOR

And your father worked these waters?

PETERFIRE

The theatre of his operations. He used to sail out a few miles to check the cloud situation for the Doctor; and also carry - I don't know what, reports or something - over to Dolomitan. Would it have been reports?

VISITOR

Yes, we have a statistical data office there. But there are no records of any colleague of the Doctor's.

PETERFIRE

Oh, father wasn't anybody's colleague, Dolomite judge; just an ignorant old sailor who never taught me my race or surname. I was just Peterfire.

VISITOR

But if he did this cloud observation -

PETERFIRE

Doctor taught him the clouds. He already knew the stars from navigation - also from astrology (the superstitious old sailor!) - and he used to say, he didn't find the clouds a shake tougher - could we please not discuss the father anymore?

VISITOR

Relations being, perhaps, not so -

PETERFIRE

he was drowned, man; didn't you hear me say so? All right, now, that's really enough about him. I only mentioned him to show that you have got accounts here.

VISITOR

well, perhaps this one very small one.

PETERFIRE

But you do recognize it?

VISITOR

But it must have been very small for there to be no mention of it in my dossier. So that I really don't think it would trouble our thinking on the station.

PETERFIRE

you want to be very careful...

VISITOR

Then you foresee -

PETERFIRE

Not me - I don't do such foreseeing as gets done around here.

VISITOR

But in your opinion, there is a real possibility of resentment?

(Dolomite wants the feelings among its data.)

PETERFIRE

Without the station, how is he going to - We have to have the station.

VISITOR

It would of course have to be carefully emphasized that no aspersions were being cast on the quality of his forecasting. In fact, quite the other way round: it was the very excellence of the data coming in from here that first called our attention to the futility of the effort.

(PETERFIRE laughs)

Have I said something?

PETERFIRE

Oh, it's just funny that you find his data so excellent.

VISITOR

I certainly had no wish to be ironic in my expression of -

PETERFIRE

Wrong track, Dolomite, and likely to keep snuffling until you absorb this: you don't - I was going to say, take a decision, but you don't even dream what you're deciding on - without a deposition from Peterfire.

VISITOR

I've no doubt you can make an irreplaceable contribution to my uncer-

standing of this problem, and I've already expressed great interest -

PETERFIRE

That's not near enough! Not near enough to start me talking it over this subject, the Doctor's confidence, the hatred in the subject, you. But let "great interest" give place to great judgment - and then Peter upon Peter will bring the lash down. Judgment, Dolomite! For judgment, data!

VISITOR

Why should you put yourself forward to me like this?

PETERFIRE

Outside the life of my thoughts...

VISITOR

Yes, Peter?

PETERFIRE

Where have I ever lived secure but on one of your grey summits?

VISITOR

Then speak, Peter! In the interest of the checked dossier.

PETERFIRE

On one of his trips to Africa - see how simply it begins; but it'll be like one of those puzzles, you know: "Two men had a cow," and in two minutes everyone's lost but the differential calculists -

VISITOR

If I sit in judgment here -

PETERFIRE

Right, right, Dolomite-right. On I fare. Or rather, down I plunge, into the deep water, and swim up with the cauldron, brought to this island by my father, a souvenir of some African voyage, and treasured as charming away bad weather because that's what the blacks ^{had} used it
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for: rain-dances. Always the superstitious sailor, yes? - but there's more there: notice, in this first circumstance I give you, notice the confidence. In blue skies (in this case); but if not in one thing, in another. This gets clearer.

When it wasn't being a gad-fly to cumuli, that cauldron could come in useful. We mounted it like a jewel in a rock of the headland there -

(gesture)

- you see very clearly from this window - and we set a lean-to over it to keep the rain off so that on bad days when my father was out on the water for the doctor watching a storm build, I was able to flash out the time of day to him, or the conditions. That is, a flame would be shooting up from the cauldron and I would slice the air in front of it six times with a tarpaulin to show six-o'clock - or long-long-short meant a fog gathering, and so on; because he never would take any instrument or timepiece onto the ocean with him.

That day father was intending just to scoot out for a quick look at the clouds and then scoot right back again, because it was the time of year it is now, squall season, the last few treacherous days. Not that he minded squalls any; no, says he, he likes the strain running up the rudder into his arm. But his enthusiasm didn't extend to the fog the squalls bring in under them. There even the superb mariner, otherwise known as superstitious old sailor, had to gail in a little. So he says to me, "Peter lad, have an eye to the heavens; Peter lad, keep thy Pa atop-wave. Be damned all fiery crotchery, but 'ware the low fog and light me in; else I carry south." which was his way of saying - and he could have just said it, you know, except he was so enchanted with being an old sailor - that I wasn't to bother flashing the hours, but give all my attention to fog-signs; and if I caught any, fire the beacon at once so he wouldn't

sail in blind against the cliffs to the south of the island. He strokes his rudder like a steed and puts off.

When the squall did come, I couldn't take my eyes off it - not because of any instructions ("he's managing," I thought, and pictured that rudder enforcing hand) - no, but because there was something so beautiful: a waterspout catching what sun there was like the bevy of a mirror and flicking colored light all over the ocean. There's never been - the Doctor confirmed me in this - never anything like it except in that one storm. Beapt the heart of Peterfire!

Then the fog came and I didn't know what to think.

At first there were just a few patches; so I looked out and I thought: "we'll leave the expert to handle that," and lit no fire. Go on, charge too much confidence, but he had produced that overconfidence in me; not by boasting, but by airs of mastery, as though no other relation of him to a difficulty were possible, thinkable. Having produced the overconfidence which lit nothing, who was to blame if he drove through the fog unlighted?

Never mind doing a calculation, this is still rudiments. But with the next question we can put our penny-slates aside: Did confidence account for my whole mind? There was a darker candidate: my hatred of - that air again, you know? that assurance of ignorant men who think they've mastered principles but are only blessed with a knack. I can't deny to my Dolomite judge the good, good irritation of thinking: "he gives himself out such a master; let's see how much he's up to." And again, the malice of an easy victory lit nothing.

Then the fog sank in and confused everything, but a flare went off in my mind: I could go on doing these wry little experiments, but my father must be going down. The panic of a danger to life

shook Peterfire. Ran for the headland, but wind had blown the lean-to over the cliff and all that wood was drenched - and what's more, must have been drenched the whole time I was delaying. I couldn't have got the beacon lit, for what that was worth. What was it worth?

What was it worth? There was a question that the longest walks by the sea didn't come any nearer answering; though the body might have been dished up at my feet any moment. The wreckage did wash in

(he goes to the window and points out)

- it sits there, presiding over things. Of course, I kept gravitating back to the cauldron, but as maybe you've been noticing, I don't abound in patience for complexities and this had been going on and on. So I put my little tooth to the immense knot: I was just about ready to pitch the thing into the sea, actually got as far as lifting it out of the rock, when I had to go and get my eye caught on this bundle:

(producing it from the drawer of the radio-table)

twelve dry sticks lashed up in an oilcloth and concealed till I just then moved the cauldron, like insects below the rock.

(holding the bundle in one hand and pointing to it with the other)

A little legacy from the father. A master, no? He had even, I could now remember, said something about having left them there - at least it was probably that he was referring to when, with one foot in the boat, he said, "Scared is a thing I do not be; for my safety lies apart, and at the beacon 'twill come on thee, an thou has need, Peterfire." which means, I ought to have known about it - assuming he was referring to this cache of dry wood; which he must have been - unless of course he was referring to some cache of affection in me.

(sets the bundle down)

But why not a little more plainly, God! a little clear! Did he know

about the wood? Did I know? was I supposed to have? Until the knots grew knots and I couldn't work a tooth in my head.

In my best moments - a Peterfire bent on the sole importance of what can only matter,- I ask the real question: whether a fire lit with any fuel, at any stage, could have been visible to that father in that fog. But as I picture him, and ask you to picture him, sailing into the fury of the storm, other questions flare off my mind to explode at the feet of the Dolomite: Had I fanned the flame of technical mastery, so producing unclouded confidence? Had I raised a sun of hope; then, in the last moments, unleashed a storm of reproaches in my father's mind?

Judgment!

VISITOR

wasn't this going to be about the Doctor and the weather-station?

PETERFIRE

What do you think I've been telling you?

VISITOR

Oh, fiery Pete! You haven't once mentioned either!

PETERFIRE

Really? All right, then, the way he works in, when I first couldn't light the beacon I came screaming to him as he sat taking readings off the anemometer. Now this may seem odd to you, but I'd spent my whole life on this rock sticking out of the ocean by no continent - and never had I laid eyes on the Meteorologist before that moment. Father again: "Drink thy draught, son Peter, and leave others to sip theirs." But I was raving so wild, I needed a deep ear, and he always was that. He heard me on as much of the tangle as there'd been up to that point; and told me he wished with every muscle in his body the fog would clear. Thirty seconds later it did, and from that

moment he's been convinced he's in charge of the world's weather.

(The VISITOR whirls on PETERFIRE as if PETERFIRE had just hit him with a stinging insult.)

Actually not so much convinced as terror-struck. Although, pretty convinced. Anyhow, not considerable.

VISITOR

Peterfire, have you brought me out in front of madness?

PETERFIRE

But do you really want my opinion? Or do you want the reasons behind his? What am I going to have to make you respect, Dolomite? How much weight where? Look to the experiments!

VISITOR

How can there be experiments for such a thing?

PETERFIRE

Technique of the oxide generator. He sends up streams of gas into the clouds and that can make it clear - or storm, he says. You would know: can it?

VISITOR

I don't have the faintest idea. Listen, Peterfire: will he be dead in now, this second?

PETERFIRE

I have to be careful. I have to be!

(He goes over to the veranda door, opens it softly, and stands looking out.)

It'll be some time. He swoons upon his generator, still only in the stage when crossing meet uncrossing hands. My poor Doctor.

(closes the door and turns back to the VISITOR)

He is my father from that hour, and would ease my mind, And I his, I his... How is it you don't know about generators? Doctor says they're the next thing in meteorology.

VISITOR

I'm not actually a meteorologist

PETERFIRE

(quickly)

But actually a Dolomite?

VISITOR

(indicating his robe)

If the cow makes the monk. Peter, I find myself longing for the strange presence.

PETERFIRE

Comes, comes. What is your field?

VISITOR

Oceanography. The science of deep water.

PETERFIRE

but you give a weatherman's work to Dolomite.

VISITOR

Ah, the things one gives the Dolomite...

(pause)

What keeps him back?

PETERFIRE

My Doctor doesn't even know about you, remember. "The things one gives the Dolomite" - what? How would I be handled?

VISITOR

Ah, Peter, I hadn't really been keeping my mind on you. You have given me quite another subject since then.

PETERFIRE

I explained this Doctor as I said. Now you explain - you! What would my grey peers make of me, and what would be the reason, and why would

it be that reason?

VISITOR

well, Peter, any Dolomite I can imagine would tell you there was a datum missing: guilt goes by the visibility of fire-in-fog for that particular storm. You can't give him a figure, he doesn't know - that Dolomite is not going to pronounce.

PETERFIRE

what do you mean, not pronounce? They're in business to assure people, aren't they?

VISITOR

(taking off his grey robe)

against shipwreck, Peter, or fire, or madness. But a conscience that tends to get exhaustive... ? If that's the kind of risk you are, what is there in those looming portfolios for you

(opens his attache case)

PETERFIRE

There has to be some attitude...

VISITOR

Coming from where?

PETERFIRE

Directors, commissions - I don't know what all.

VISITOR

(folding his robe into the attache case)

ah, they're not a bureaucracy. And there's no removed leader - some Grand Dolom, or something - as far as I can see. In fact, there doesn't seem to be any structure; they form and re-form: squads, congregations, democracies. The only impression that stays with me is of a lot of grey figures with huge portfolios very interested

in death.

PETERFIRE

That cheerless? I don't know, when Father sailed in from Dolomitean, he used to tell how they'd danced down to the beach with him, waving and laughing.

VISITOR

Yes, that would have been their rate-sheets they were waving, which have been laminated against sea-air. Each Dolomite is allowed three waves. Though whether they actually were laughing, I doubt. A Dolomite isn't supposed to do anything with his face that would make you remember it.

PETERFIRE

So one begins to understand Dolomites. And to wonder if one has invited the judgment of a very right-thinking one.

VISITOR

(smiling)

Receiving Storm-Dispatchers is not among the uses of Dolomite Grey.

PETERFIRE

I wonder, too, how you'll do judging this weather-station in their interest.

VISITOR

What do you favor there, Peter?

PETERFIRE

That's as likes the Gentlemen in Grey.

VISITOR

But if the decision lay on those fiery shoulders?

PETERFIRE

I want my Doctor back. Clear. Unclouded. You tell me.

VISITOR

The station has all the instruments for him to go on with his delusion.

PETERFIRE

But also, to go on with the experiments which may - and they only - clear his mind.

VISITOR

are they having that effect?

PETERFIRE

You mean, according to what I told you?

VISITOR

well, yes. what else have I?

PETERFIRE

According to what I've told you, then?

VISITOR

(puzzled)

Yes.

PETERFIRE

The data pours down on him. He sits, folder on one knee, folder on other knee, folder between his hands, and he doesn't seem to know how to get to a conclusion; how much weight to put there.

VISITOR

This is beginning to sound a little like someone else I know.

PETERFIRE

I told you knowing the Doctor involves knowing me.

VISITOR

but does helping the Doctor involve helping you?

PETERFIRE

Can you really be shrewd enough to have pierced my little depths already, just two minutes after you've taken that robe off?

VISITOR

And I in my turn, Peterfire, I wonder about you, whether you really don't see a use for his madness - your use for his madness.

PETERFIRE

even to have guessed the thing I don't dare ask of you: is the oceanographer really down that far?

VISITOR

What matters to you is visibility through fog in a particular storm. That's what it's going to take to clear your mind again: the exact recreation of your father's death-storm.

(Enter the METEOROLOGIST from the veranda, carrying top part of the device described in the appendix)

METEOROLOGIST

All right, come on out, Peter; this is the crucial -

(see the VISITOR)

What's this?

PETERFIRE

From the Dolomite.

METEOROLOGIST

(to VISITOR)

You're not wearing your grey.

VISITOR

It's in my bag. I try not to have it on too much, except for big company occasions or -

METEOROLOGIST

That's all right, I wasn't criticizing. Will you excuse me a moment - he heard a voice that must have been his own ticking.

(Leans to individual, who joins him downstage, out of earshot of the VISITOR)

Now look! I've got a fire going under the generator. The minute smoke starts coming out you clamp this on

(handing him the device)

over the top - this has to be the minute the smoke starts, or everything 'll happen too fast and the fire burn out. All right?

(PETERFIRE nods, starts to exit, she turns to the VISITOR.)

PETE FIRE

This is the start of knowing the Doctor. Remember what's involved in knowing the Doctor.

(Exit PETERFIRE, onto the veranda.)

METEOROLOGIST

(a little worried by that)

What's he been telling you?

VISITOR

Now you "saved his mind," was the expression, I think. Greetings from the Chambers of the Dolomite!

METEOROLOGIST

Yes, hello. It sounded like he told you plenty.

VISITOR

I was shown around a very convoluted mind.

METEOROLOGIST

Oh, Peterfire and that convoluted mind! You don't sound very troubled, though. Greyly true to form.

VISITOR

I assure you -

METEOROLOGIST

no! Just the wrong word!

(the facetious manner beginning to appear a little forced)

So. Now's every little thing on Dolomitan? Chugging along?

VISITOR

Ever at peace.

METEOROLOGIST

(gesture as if weighing one expression in each hand and reaching no conclusion)

"Ever at peace," "chugging along" ...

VISITOR

You don't sound very touched yourself.

METEOROLOGIST

I? But seared! not having access to any asbestite grey.

VISITOR

In fact, in general you aren't turning out to be exactly a fountain-head of compassion -

METEOROLOGIST

Oh, that's a fancy word! Look, this boy walks in here off the street -

VISITOR

Out of the blue.

METEOROLOGIST

Yes, really quite out of the blue - and it's always fascinated me: my being all these years on this island - and how big can it be, a half a mile square? - and never once seen him - though I had all kinds of dealings with his father - until that day. Would you

believe it?

VISITOR

Oh, listen, this is hardly something unique to the desert island, is it? One lives across the hall from people and has one's first glimpse when the tier goes by.

METEOROLOGIST

Quite a deep thought for a Dolomite; yes; right. Anyhow, in sails this boy, whirling around in the distraction of his father's death-storm -

VISITOR

and you moved heaven and earth to help him.

METEOROLOGIST

Ha?

VISITOR

I think that's how he put it.

METEOROLOGIST

Well, he put it too strongly then - why would he want to say a thing like that? Food, I let him have food. I threw up a shelter over him -

VISITOR

storm-clouds were forbidden the premises...

METEOROLOGIST

Ha? But mainly, I equipped him for these talks -

VISITOR

In which you went over everything?

METEOROLOGIST

we did. why? wouldn't you have?

VISITOR

He asked me - and it wasn't just discussion he wanted, it was Dolomite judgment - but what's the point? Helping Peterfire means getting him to stop: stop mulling, stop weighing, stop turning.

METEOROLOGIST

There we part company. I wouldn't minimize his suffering?

VISITOR

Not I would.

METEOROLOGIST

well, you're a Dolomite.

VISITOR

and I'd go one farther. I'd minimize his motives, too, make them just as small as I can. After all, does having a big, complicated problem like his - oh, certainly, it gives one the feeling of a moral thick - but does it really make you all that admirably morally delicate as Peterfire clearly just loves thinking he is? It could just be, there's a certain kind of moral here who delights in watching the fixities of a dilemma swim round in his mind like goldfish.

METEOROLOGIST

yes, well, that wouldn't apply to Peterfire.

VISITOR

Oh, I didn't just mean Peterfire...

METEOROLOGIST

Back to your cove, Dolomite: this is getting to be deep water.

(he moves to the radio, begins half consciously to finger the dials.)

Peterfire's dramatic, but the least of my worries.

VISITOR

Your worries?

METEOROLOGIST

(on his guard)

Oh...

(notices his fingers on the radio)

Nice clear reports for the Dolomite, for example.

VISITOR

And for another example?

(Their eyes meet; the METEOROLOGIST turns away.)

METEOROLOGIST

What I'm saying is, there aren't all that many unknowns for him...

VISITOR

Well, isn't that just what I'm saying? Yes, all right, maybe he could have worked his beacon a little differently, but how important could that flicker of a flame be. The storm was the storm! What, did he think he could roll his own thunder or get the lightning on his terms?

METEOROLOGIST

(as if suddenly consenting to drop an elaborate pretense)

All right, what's wrong on Dolomitan?

VISITOR

Ever at peace.

METEOROLOGIST

Then why are you here?

VISITOR

I am the Legate-Inspector -

METEOROLOGIST

They never come here; they park on Dolomite and we send the files over.

VISITOR

That will not be my procedure.

METEOROLOGIST

That has been the procedure of every Dolomite from the first day of time.

VISITOR

However, my mission is of such a nature -

(pause)

METEOROLOGIST

"Such a nature" - yes?

VISITOR

(picking his words carefully)

- that there is going to have to be some discussion face to face.

METEOROLOGIST

Just be a little realistic, is all I'm asking you: what possible way could I have had of knowing they were being taken for their airing just at that moment?

VISITOR

I'm sorry? No, there's been talk in the Great Chambers of closing this weather-station.

METEOROLOGIST

Ah.

(His fingers again began to twist idly the knobs on the radio.)

This you may not do.

VISITOR

well, that's why I'm here, you see: to inquire into such pro's and con's as you may have for me.

METEOROLOGIST

(very quiet and firm)

No pro's, not a con, just a fact: this station goes on!

VISITOR

well, good, then; if that's your opinion -

METEOROLOGIST

I know: you'd like some more evidence, please. I'm familiar with that bottomless hunger, the slopping into grey bliss...

VISITOR

Doctor, I am a colleague and your definite superior. What possible good can you be hoping to do your case -

METEOROLOGIST

My case! You sit here under the same sky and talk to me of "my case"! Of all the rich ironies Dolomite seem to go out of their way to miss, none of you will ever miss a dinner. This man says, "my case":

VISITOR

and with accuracy I say it. It's you displaying the passion, and it's you - not the Dolomite - for whom some vital interest seems to be at stake.

METEOROLOGIST

The work here goes on!

VISITOR

And again I say, that is perhaps your view; but no Dolomite-insured ship sails anywhere near -

METEOROLOGIST

NOT THAT WORK.

VISITOR

It is to that work I must insist your remarks be confined.

METEOROLOGIST

(seems to calculate for a moment; then:)

all right, yes, I think I can just manage. Now you want to argue that, as none of our ships sail the South Atlantic, it's wasteful to keep up facilities for checking conditions there. But that argument - he said, straightening his hair and brushing the chalk from his collar - betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of weather science. You want to know the local weather around certain Mediterranean or North Sea ports, but there is no "local weather". There is only the endless fury of the atmosphere driving around an irregularly heated globe. Certain cyclogeneses may be comprehensible only in the light of advections half a world away, and tomorrow's wind-sneers could be traced to an occluded front in the time of Hannibal. Hydrometers over Africa can send the Danish fleet down, and a drop in the Eskimo barometer blow roofs off the coaling-stations of Tasmania. You may not elect to understand the weather here, at this point, now; to cut into the elemental dance where it's convenient to you. Stations must stand below every acre of the world's sky - not because the world-scale is truest, but because, there is no other.

VISITOR

It's still a funny thing to get excited about; I mean, where in our experience can't one pick out the interlinkage? As for instance: take some natural disaster - a storm, say. The flooding will drive refugees about the countryside and maybe one is driven to a poor woman's door. She gives him the last bread in the house, so that a

rat accustomed to take his meals at her larder has to find supper elsewhere. So he goes and gnaws the insulation off a telegraph line, with the result that word of the advancing flood never gets telegraphed down-river and thousands perish. Can we say, and still mean something by it, that the refugee has a particularly ugly guilt to bear, for having spread what he suffered? or the woman, for having, where she thought to relieve, compounded? Are we really interested in cause-and-effect if we're interested in it like that?

METEOROLOGIST

And you don't even entertain the possibility of the rat. In general you talk like one who never lifted his hand in the knowledge that it would bring the whirlwind down.

VISITOR

What should I talk like?

METEOROLOGIST

I happen to be right about how to study the weather.

VISITOR

All right, but why so ditty-bound? You know they'll give a set of equipment to anyone who likes playing with the dials.

METEOROLOGIST

Is that an insinuation on the quality of my work here?

VISITOR

It was the excellence of your work that first called our attention to the facility.

METEOROLOGIST

Fleming ironists!

VISITOR

Your "Reflections on the storm with the Unique Prismatic Water-Spout" is a classic of Dolomite education.

METEOROLOGIST

Shall I confide something to you? I sometimes think the whole race of Dolomites was created for my particular amusement.

VISITOR

Let me novitiate study your techniques of isobar analysis, even your sentence structure...

METEOROLOGIST

"Dolomites" - I never listened to just the word before. It does sound, doesn't it, like an order of hospital-tending monks. Nothing so serviceable, however. Just a lot of leaves driven before the will...

VISITOR

And if it were permitted a Dolomite to dream to surpass -

METEOROLOGIST

(turning on him suddenly)

Are you this dead-set to work out the pride in me? You just can't get up much of an interest in anything else, can you, as being really particularly important? All right, I'll say it, and can honestly say it, and put a meaning into it you never dreamed of: that my work could give me pride enough to bring down a skyful of morning stars. My work is of a power and value inestimable to this world you insure in your fantastic business, as if you were God Almighty, as if you were. If you were attuned to this apparent raving, if it were once given you to see me in anything like my real dimensions -

VISITOR

We see you as an Olympian among forecasters.

METEOROLOGIST

Whether sending rain or withholding it? ah, then it could be you see too much, too well. You wouldn't be trying to get me off the island out of professional jealousy?

VISITOR

An, now there's something I really can be reassuring about. I'm not even in meteorology.

METEOROLOGIST

What are you, anyway - aside from being the most puzzling Dolomite of my acquaintance?

VISITOR

Oceanographer, actually. Research into the penetrability of deep water.

METEOROLOGIST

Is that experimental at all?

VISITOR

Almost entirely. What we do, we sail out over some depression in the ocean floor and turn a light on it - light from a number of sources: polarized, fluorescent, flame - the idea being to see how far differently produced kinds of light will penetrate the sea-water.

METEOROLOGIST

When you use a flame, how do you fuel it?

VISITOR

Oh, kerosene...

METEOROLOGIST

You should try silver oxide; it's very good for portable flames.

I offer that as my contribution. Aghow, it all sounds pretty tame.

VISITOR

And yet, one winter afternoon off the coast of Greenland, we brought up the monster. I say, "the monster" - I don't know what it was, actually; we never got a full view, only a lot of black coils churning out of the sea and sinking in again. Nearly flipped us into the North Sea, whatever it was. I guess we must have shined a light in its eye and irritated it.

METEOROLOGIST

ah, now that's no Delomite work. You're getting better. I don't see how you got in with them, you know.

VISITOR

ah, the ways one "gets in" with the Delomites...

METEOROLOGIST

which have I ever been able to understand it in my own case. Could one not allow oneself to take that as the clear, salient sign that one is not, need not be, of them.

VISITOR

Of course, I must respect -

METEOROLOGIST

wait, before you start in on that vein, take a minute to grasp what's being offered you.

VISITOR

but how can I not respect -?

METEOROLOGIST

what? Assurance before the uncontrollable? let me assure you, the uncontrollable is not such easy dealing. I have a remarkable way to know that, but do not press me. Take advantage of my vision.

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VISITOR

NOT with a loss of data. I can't! I am a man whose whole career lies in three spiral notebooks; now can I be anything but respectful of such perfection? Dolomite is not a poor enthusiast - as you must be aware as well as anyone: the spiral notebooks lie open to receive your life.

METEOROLOGIST

ACH, much fact which has never been thought on. Much acquisition and no inquisition at all. Be cumulative and never frame a test, seems to be the attitude there - but this is not satisfactory! The wisdom of the whole Dolomite race is pinches off a big demented brain that lies rotting somewhere; a clustering of clouds upon the green plastic of a radar screen no one watches.

VISITOR

That's what you think of them. I am responsible to them.

METEOROLOGIST

Oh, and none of that! None of that holas anymore! And don't try to shame me - as if maybe there were something I didn't know about responsibility.

VISITOR

ies - yours - with all the intensity in the world. But let the other view urge his ... ! Don't you see I can't give an inch till you give a reason? Tell me what's behind the vitaperation and I'll try and get your station for you.

METEOROLOGIST

wait a moment; I just thought of something I want to know. You say Peterfire asked you for judgment. How would you have judged?

VISITOR

But that was just the point: I couldn't judge. Don't tell me you

share that obsession. What he needs is unfortunately something he's no prospect of ever getting: he needs the death-storm back, that's where his tribunal is sitting, handing down - not verdicts, but - the ratification of the senses in the heat of experiment.

METEOROLOGIST

Ah, then it's all right, I won't be telling a Dolomite when I tell you, you're arguing with the master of the world's weather.

(No marked reaction, beyond an intense stare, from VISITOR. Long pause.)

is it...no more of a moment?

VISITOR

I guess I felt something like this coming.

METEOROLOGIST

There is nothing like this - anywhere in the past of anyone; and no time holds anything pertaining. No word anywhere in my statements will bear anything like its earlier meaning; the action is kicked up to a sphere not covered. But still, I'm going to be speaking carefully, if only to show you the preparation that went into this moment.

Consciousness of this affliction, this power, this afflictive power, crashes in on me the day I break Peterfire's death-storm; but because it did not grow, or, like agony upon a sleeper, gain, where is the assurance I hadn't been thundering for years now? Then it would go back into a swirl of childhood hallucinations and forgotten snows. This power came with me into the world! - is a possibility. And of all there is to terrify me, nothing actually does terrify me so much as to think: how much rain before I woke? I should not have to have that crawl on my brain, not that one, too. But as my thought gathers itself into the complaint, I already do not know what I mean. Have I been wronged -

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dealt with, even - that I should have taken to saying, "this power in me" and never bring it out as "my power"? I would like to give whole afternoons to that question alone, but there's no time to spare off the simple immensity. In all events, I don't think consciousness in me can burn much brighter than that question. Bolt upright now, and sweating into the bed-clothes, I enforce cycles of global weather as beneficent as all the statistics I know can make it. And even so, when the cold spell or twister slips by its occasional loss of life on me, the effect is best described as - not madness, but the sense that madness must be not too unlike this. Not that I'll be raving for the dead; but the more failures, the less certainty I have to have - and you don't suppose I'd be two minutes wavering between deluded and responsible! More deaths are the only basis on which I can keep hoping - without any illusions, however, as to where those deaths are coming from, because proof of my weather power keeps soaring: from 13 out of 50 two years ago to 79 in 120 today. Seventy-nine extrusions of my will into the upper atmosphere: an ice-storm talked over the Hungarian plain, tropic skies brought to bear for three hours on the heart of Greenland, a monsoon rain in the area of the hills of Moab - these are the kinds of successes; and you try and name one disaster anywhere since the death-storm - oh, except maybe those two blizzards in Kazan which I don't understand at all.

But now look, with reference to your mission, think a minute about this power: I don't know where I get it, or what I'm doing with it - so then how can I possibly know the conditions on it? Maybe I could pack my generator and go and set up effectively in Stockholm or Berlin or Bolognina; it's perfectly possible. Only, I never can know that, can I, never interrupt my cycles, those wheels which turn me, long enough to go and find out. So I hope your wires are going to sound a little painful and crazy, now when I

put them back in your mind: there has been talk of closing this station. Closing this station! - when a day's neglect could bring the ice-age in!

VISITOR

The first thing I have to ask you is whether ~~you've~~ made every effort to clear your mind - don't be offended, I'm sure you have.

METEOROLOGIST

Ah, I'm so anxious for us to get past this stage! Look, you know I'm a great scientist, and in a few minutes I'm going to have you thinking I'm a sane man again; in the meantime would you just not start condescending all at once? All right? Would you just give me credit for a little complexity - as much as you give Peterfire would do - and for a little ordinary human bafflement? Of course I didn't just permit myself this belief; I put down traps for madness everywhere. But I had only to read today's weather-map and see yesterday's intention figured there; and I gave way. But this was when I had to give way, when seventy-nine suns had shone in my will and gone down with my instruments. Not that anything about this number could be felt as decisive...

VISITOR

As you say, hardly. And what a good sign in your saying so.

METEOROLOGIST

Ah, but don't be one of those awful people on whom one's best is lost! If you have a doubt and I have it - that's possible; but there couldn't be any similarity in our roots there. My thought lies trackless before the man who has never projected his mind as a storm sky. Forget ideas; are even words going to ring alike on opposite brinks of that inversion, that monstrous inversion, where you have on the one hand a world of people taking their mood from

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the weather, and then you have me, whenever there's a cloud in the sky having to search my mood for something that might have put it there. Just on the model of some fancy-minded poet running the world.

VISITOR

An, but now Doctor, now let me be a little acute. I keep hearing about complexity so much; all right, question one under that heading: how can you be sure it's not a lust for power that glides the clouds after a fancy in your mind?

METEOROLOGIST

Are you seriously bringing in terms like these?

VISITOR

Come on, come on, Doctor; be a realist with the lights on, too.

METEOROLOGIST

What? - do I "like" it?

VISITOR

would there be such a covering of traces if not?

METEOROLOGIST

No, but ask: if so, would I be so "on" to the irony?

VISITOR

Just where in your view is there so much?

METEOROLOGIST

Why, in the getting stuck, surely - a terrified old Doctor getting stuck with the prize for world-conquerors: power that Attila gnashed his yellow teeth for, and that reconciled Bonaparte to sand in his peaches, and Caesar to afternoons among the wolf Poles, and Alexander to sphere geometry. They dreamed - and look who got it!; and I can furnish or flash out every land they ever dreamed of!

VISITOR

The next question comes of listening very carefully to your voice. You started off and you were going to show me an irony, but in excitement you pant.

METEOROLOGIST

Oh, I can't be talking left and right like this! When I tell you a thing like, "every whim of mine draws a sky of weather in its wake," can you really think that under the conventional category of the possible? Can you really not see how I must be putting on guilt as fast as I breathe? Everything I do is from the first moment all repercussions, as if

(picking up an electric megaphone off a cabinet-top; some microphone were sending out every heartbeat as a roll of thunder.

(He switches on the megaphone and talks through it) I'm delicate, I'm swollen in the mind. This power has stretched me and stretched me till I hang like a carcass of bad weather over the entire phenomenal world and nobody sees more than

(switches off megaphone)

three inches of me.

VISITOR

Yes, but now, "guilt". Why should you feel any more guilty than responsible - and why more responsible than in control?

METEOROLOGIST

(sets down megaphone)

Dilemme questions, statistics. Are you going to turn out a dilemme on my hands after all?

VISITOR

You don't, as you seem to think, answer everything with that word.

METEOROLOGIST

Maybe not with that word...

VISITOR

Was that the great misadventure being confident?

METEOROLOGIST

"Confident" is a funny word for after the blood's flowed.

VISITOR

You mean - ?

METEOROLOGIST

I mean, blood has already rained on these weather-beaten hands! When you first got here I assumed it must be about that: the time I made rain over Dolomitan and there was a flash flood that drowned a young Dolomite out for his airing. His laminated rate-sheets were found floating in a slag-pit. Here guilt was sure; but precisely because it was so sure, because there was no problem at all about saying, "you slew that boy," what I was drawn to consider was just the other kind of situation, the endlessly unsure. Just keep your mind on it and at some point the horror's going to have to burst: one's slated to contribute to every disaster on earth, but never know in what respect or how much. That turns out to be the effect when you croak a Dolomite.

VISITOR

And it's really so much easier to be guilty than maybe to be guilty?

METEOROLOGIST

Do you really find that so paradoxical? Knowing here means knowing for sure. Seventy-nine one-twentieth's isn't a number, it's ignorance!

VISITOR

Better your data, then.

METEOROLOGIST

No, the Delemita suggestion: more of the old unserviceable same. But I won't better my data. But I could - with this new valve-attachment on my generator - I could perform the decisive experiment...

VISITOR

well, all right, then, there's your way out. What's bothering you?

METEOROLOGIST

... only, I'm waiting for something... Now look: Suppose that experiment were to show there is no way out.

VISITOR

I wouldn't be prepared to give any consideration to that.

METEOROLOGIST

Then you wouldn't be prepared to experiment, would you?

VISITOR

But what's keeping you. First comes all this storm about not being sure, and then -

METEOROLOGIST

And then, I hesitate. But don't - I can see you doing it - slurring the alternatives as if experiment gave me the choice of sanity or madness. My alternative to madness is not sanity, but a flight of power so great as to be itself almost a kind of madness - and no exit through a doubt this time. Would you perform the Decisive Experiment?

VISITOR

how could I not?

METEOROLOGIST

You're still not thinking with me - which I admit would be some thinking. But now about this: would you be responsible for my performing it? - he asked, hardly daring to breathe.

VISITOR

That's another question.

METEOROLOGIST

That's another question.

VISITOR

And one I don't see much in. Why does there have to be someone responsible? For what; to whom?

METEOROLOGIST

If the experiment shows up any power, a big problem is going to move to the fore: where does it go when I'm through with it? or, the problem of the successor - meaning who? I say, the one that pulled me into it. He can't just walk in here and stick me with a lot of big promises about how nice and free and insane I was going to be, such a shame it didn't work out. No, anyone saddles me with a certainty, he's going to have to succeed to it, and realize, the thing he's making out of me he's making himself into - two models going up together. Oh, if I come out a little crazy, there's no problem, the problem solves itself. But now about that craziness, now - would you, taking you as the only example in the vicinity, - would you feel sure enough to ride your peace on it? wait, don't answer, you can't possibly answer yet. Suppose another thing. Suppose all my power were known, I mean, widely known: would you put it past this rain-sodden generation to crush me, for all my beneficence and planning, just to be out from one yoke the more? At very least I'd be prostrated under the pressure. But now, with

a successor - secret, secret successor - I could walk around in the light - keep living, keep functioning - and just now and then remind them what an avenger I had waiting in the shadows. Things like a famine or a drowned continent could be exacted, and no one would begin to know where to look. They would strike, and it would be at nothing; but would be stricken very precisely.

VISITOR

You see what this has done to you?

METEOROLOGIST

with the clarity of one of my own thunder flashes. And it could be, not all that much, considering. Sufficient though, wouldn't you say?, to give to pause to any experimenter: a life organized against discovery, three billion souls accountable, and all this while, under everything, the drifting of the will toward power. So tell me, how does that all look to you - and tell me fast, it's the last few hours of the hurricane season.

VISITOR

You mean you've been talking about now: all the equipment and every-thing - you're what ready?

METEOROLOGIST

Well, you know, I've always had to have a time going -

VISITOR

(remembering)

remembering...

METEOROLOGIST

... so I let him talk mine, and that keeps him happy and keeps me ready, all the time ready, so that any moment can be decisive in the hands of the right experimenter.

VISITOR

Now, wait a minute, what's this about a flame and this generator you keep talking about? I want to hear about all this some more.

METEOROLOGIST

Already at the stage where you can't know too much, huh? I think we've got the hurricane beat, then, so I'll expand. Well: as you may or may not know, every little rain-drop has a heart, a little tough little heart of ice or salt or whatever - never was one without. So to imagine the conditions, you have to imagine the sky full of a lot of tormented shapeless water, panting for something to get its being round. (Though why vapor should pine after the droplet state, what's wrong with being up there, heaven knows. Mysteries.) Now with my generator, what I do is, I send up streams of silver oxide particles to put heart into that vapor, and don't those aqueous molecules push and shove! So we'll have some rain from the generator, and then I'll think angry thoughts and we'll have some thunder.

VISITOR

But "decisive"?

METEOROLOGIST

Yes, because look: I'll fit on the new valve device and we'll know if our particles brought that weather. Which about brings me to the limits of my clarity.

VISITOR

Yes, all right; only -

METEOROLOGIST

Oh, but now, to refuse: If there's enough probability for you to refuse, there's enough to do me and never an experiment.

VISITOR

not refuse; but I do want to make a condition, I think. You must still have all the instrument readings for Peterfire's death-storm?

METEOROLOGIST

First entry in a little book of mine.

VISITOR

because surely that's the weather for you to create - re-create - every last detail of barometric pressure, and wind speed, and rain. If you can get all that, you'll need a successor.

METEOROLOGIST

It makes me worry you don't really sense the magnitude, you know, when you say a thing like that - I mean, that you should have one ounce of grey matter free to be thinking out Peter's problem along with mine. Mine!

VISITOR

coming from someone who cares about Peterfire -

METEOROLOGIST

Peterfire is my life in the shell of a crazy boy! But whether it's me or Peter you're talking about, that storm could not be more painful - why did you start with that storm anyway?

VISITOR

As being, between you and Peter, the intersection at which both solutions lie. You know you're not going to hit this mania anywhere out at the source. Then turn all this power you drain for yourself back upon the past, get your source back, have your first time - or else that'll become for you the time it did work, and this is no decisive experiment, but a moment of bad luck when it merely didn't.

METEOROLOGIST

that would be for me. Where do all these cosmic beings get powerfire?

VISITOR

What does he want in this world but one more look at that storm, so he can measure the visibility and go. It's not a recent lightning - no more than to you - but the event he may never get one; so when your storm abates, among other things, a medium for the flight of Peterfire's beacon - and I'll tell him the rocketeering craft has been ordered into the position where his father's boat went down, to report if the beacon was visible or no. Of course, they'll be instructed to report 'invisible' whatever they see; I'm sure you see the necessity of that little deception - as insurance. So we achieve: one preoccupationless powerfire - not to mention a doctor who gets his picnics rained on like everyone else. If this be falsehood and upon me proved - then I'll be by later for the key to the thunderbolt armory.

(He suddenly leaves off speaking, and seems to be hearing his words over again. His face clouds.)

There isn't a thing, is there, that I haven't offered?

METEOROLOGIST

It's something, isn't it?

VISITOR

I don't know why this should be, but I can actually feel my bones or tendons or somewhere inside of me - hesitating. Here I am, I've got down for you and Peter and the elements -

METEOROLOGIST

and we're all ready to clamber up ...

VISITOR

and I'm hesitating...

(Enter PETERFIRE from the veranda, very upset.)

PETERFIRE

Another fire out, another scandal against the poor bandied name of Peterfire! This Dolomite! I had been staring my eyes out, but this Dolomite's words took my concentration away, and the eyes followed to where the mind always is. I turned from watching the generator to watching the fire in my mind again, but as the storm came tearing around the headdress, the fire shut off.

METEOROLOGIST

What, has the generator gone off, is that why we're being treated to ~~the~~ this?

PETERFIRE

Beacons, row after row, and Peter always with his eyes away at that moment - on, no one knows what this means to me but me! "Not your fault!" cry choruses of grey consoles; but I am preparing some new disaster every minute!

METEOROLOGIST

I tell you, Peter, why don't you just go in and start the pump again.

PETERFIRE

Who knows what boats will be going down?

METEOROLOGIST

(with fury)

That's not this fire!

PETERFIRE

I'm tired your telling me there's more than one. All right, there's more than one. But for you to point out every beacon that ever waited for me to try my hand - what's that? It's grimaces, nothing but. I have sat down before two beacons now and kept no light burning - there's Peterfire!

VISITOR

(to METEOROLOGIST, nodding significantly)

Yes.

METEOROLOGIST

(to VISITOR)

All right, I'll bring in the equipment.

(to PETERFIRE)

Now one goes off to handle that fire, now another. You wrestled a while, now I got in and wrestle.

(Exit METEOROLOGIST onto veranda.)

PETERFIRE

What does he mean, he'll bring in the equipment?

VISITOR

(Shakes his head sadly,

fierce, fiery. There just went all the embers again.

PETERFIRE

But never a drop more passionate than I need to be.

(pause)

So do I suppose you've had it all from him now?

VISITOR

The further history of Peterfire? I confess to being a little more conversant.

PETERFIRE

Oh, and I can just hear him doing it, too: clipping away until, 'Oh, you dreadful boy! Such a fuss over that silver?'

But I didn't mean me; I meant his regency in the atmosphere - did he confide any of it?

VISITOR

He had a little drive through the clouds.

PETERFIRE

Isn't it something, really, to hear that old scientist rave like a
hona on the subject of his subtleties and his pricks of conscience
and his weights! Don't you ^{really} think it's something - I mean, as if
it were me or something - some real trouble?

VISITOR

Very like you, Peterfire - and I'm afraid I can't summon up much
confidence in your failure to see it.

PETERFIRE

(challenging)

What, how is he like me - one way?

VISITOR

He has thought himself into real trouble, -

PETERFIRE

Thought himself crazy, is what he's thought himself.

VISITOR

and gives himself plenty to think about.

PETERFIRE

The conclusion being?

VISITOR

The conclusion being, that there's more than one person on this
island who could use a decisive experiment.

PETERFIRE

That's not exactly the surprise of the the century, is it?

VISITOR

but you were not correct to represent him as helpless among the evi-
dence.

PETERFIRE

Don't tell me ^{no} on top of everything else he's gone and convinced himself?

VISITOR

He knows what it would take to.

PETERFIRE

Oh, is that what he's saying now? But in the end, you know, he'll just hand you the decimal equivalent for seventy-nine one-twentieths again.

VISITOR

No. There's evidently a new technique, and it he could be convinced by. He's agreed to abide by the result.

PETERFIRE

You don't mean he's actually going to? That equipment he went in for... ?

VISITOR

instruments of the new technique.

PETERFIRE

You mean he's just going to go ahead and know - nothing to be afraid of, no good reason for staying in the dark?

VISITOR

I don't understand your asking that. Any fear of his is something you must have been over a thousand times.

PETERFIRE

Yes, that's what I mean: seeing as how he could wind up having to regard himself as the all-time hole in the roof, he wouldn't just sit down and start flicking the dials, would he?

VISITOR

Why do you get so callous, the two of you, the minute dinner starts in on the other?

PETERFINK

Very different reasons: he, for being so taken with the general misery that there's not much responsiveness left toward any one of his charges; I, for not really understanding how even human nature could produce that problem. But taken together, it comes out pretty callous.

VISITOR

This is to convince me you don't take him seriously?

PETERFINK

Oh, I watch him seriously, we watch each other very seriously, mirror to mirror. And we find these little evidences, little expressions...

VISITOR

Isn't a decisive experiment something you'd wish him?

PETERFINK

What I wish him is confidence in some experiment is decisive, but why this one would be, particularly, what even means you wish -

VISITOR

Because I set the condition.

PETERFINK

(Impatient)

Oh, but that doesn't mean anything, the condition - it could be any condition.

VISITOR

(Steadily)

No, Peter. It couldn't be any condition. I think you know that.

PETERFIRE

(nervous)

I don't know anything about a thing like this! But one thing don't try and tell me, and that's that what's important is the conditions. Because they can be met or not met, and that says nothing about how he'll take it!

VISITOR

Oh, if this condition were met, I don't think there'd be much doubt now any of us would take it.

PETERFIRE

Watch that "any of us"; I don't get sucked in like that.

VISITOR

Sorry, Peter, but there wouldn't be.

(he crosses to his attache case and flips the snaps open.)

PETERFIRE

You can't know a thing like that. How do you claim to know it?

VISITOR

(takes out the grey robe and begins to put it on) because everything's been made so exact, you see - barometer, rainfall, wind - all exact. An experiment, to be quite fair, would leave openings, margins; but I point out to him, if it's mastery you're testing for, there's no test except on conditions of mastery. Of course, this view - taking as it does the most incredible accuracy for granted - rigs it a little. But I'm sure you see the necessity -

PETERFIRE

I see you've got on your grey again.

VISITOR

Yes, well, this being -

PETERFIRE

and I make a note. What do you mean, "rigged", how could you have rigged it - or do you do weather, too?

VISITOR

Simply by insisting that his recreation of every feature - everything! - exactly as it was, would be no more than the essence of the thing.

PETERFIRE

As what was? When?

VISITOR

in the sky of your father's death-storm.

PETERFIRE

You haven't really got him to do just the thing -

(catches himself)

What is it with you and that storm? Didn't I make it clear - didn't he, even - the amount of ill-wind that storm blows us?

VISITOR

You need that storm again. That - that particular - storm.

PETERFIRE

I don't want reminding.

VISITOR

well! and he needed a particular storm to create.

PETERFIRE

Yes, but there's one little additional thing: he can't create it. And if he can't create it, what do I learn from it? He's saved, he sees he can't do it; I'm as I was, seeing as how it can't be done.

VISITOR

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Having lost?

FATHERFIRE

Oh, not "lost" anything. I just don't happen to like this dolomitic economy of birds per stone. And there is something to lose - which is more than there is to gain: my peace after profiting from his madness.

VISITOR

You won't be profiting from his madness. Unless he's sane you won't profit.

FATHERFIRE

Are you beginning to entertain that possibility?

VISITOR

I mean, sane enough. Look, it's certainly possible he can do something about the weather; and maybe, for your purposes, that'll be enough. I don't believe in his delusion, but I don't disbelieve in his instruments.

FATHERFIRE

At some point in there I would be doing the Doctor a wrong...

VISITOR

Now why do you say that? The storm was for him the root-moment. This is the weather he'd have to remake if he'd never heard of Fatherfire.

FATHERFIRE

I am going to be the cause of some wrong...

VISITOR

You're just going to get up on the headland and light your beacon, is the extent of your activity. Dolomites do the rest. The Visitation Craft will sail to the position where your father's boat went down

and report whether the flame was visible or not.

PETERFIRE

Visible as a "self-restoring electrical flash", say?

VISITOR

Parach?

PETERFIRE

How will they know all these commercial things they're supposed to do?

VISITOR

I've already sent them their instructions, you see.

PETERFIRE

You've already sent them their instructions?

VISITOR

I have, yes.

PETERFIRE

What, over the radio?

VISITOR

Yes.

PETERFIRE

Over the microphone?

VISITOR

Yes.

PETERFIRE

Ah. So now I really will be seeing for myself, won't I?

VISITOR

The first certified reports go to you.

(Enter METEOROLOGIST with generator and attachment -
the two parts of the device described in the appendix.)

Here's another one all ready to roll.

METEOROLOGIST

(to VISITOR, indicating the grey robe)

Why have you got that on? Now, of all times!

VISITOR

Whatever else this turns out to be, it's certainly a company occasion.

PETERFIRE

Is it ever!

METEOROLOGIST

Not that tone, Peter. This isn't the usual dolomite.

PETERFIRE

A dolomite fair and true!

METEOROLOGIST

Hasn't any of it pleased you, Peter, or made you glad?

PETERFIRE

At being so painstakingly briefed?

METEOROLOGIST

At being let out from under.

PETERFIRE

It'll be a moment, Doctor, when some preoccupations give way.

METEOROLOGIST

I wish we made the same application of that remark.

PETERFIRE

I don't think we're going to be making many applications together any more.

METEOROLOGIST

(sadly)

Why do you think that?

PETERFIRE

Because, what has it always been that absorbed us in us? You know. I know. And we'll never say. To the headland! - and beyond.

(starts to exit)

VISITOR

you're ready to start up the flame?

PETERFIRE

Always.

VISITOR

Do it carefully. Do everything carefully. Now all your certainty lies with you.

PETERFIRE

you remember that, Dolomite - you remember. Ungrapple, Doctor - and each to his horizon!

(exit PETERFIRE, by the outside door)

VISITOR

and off he flies again.

METEOROLOGIST

Don't make the mistake - and you've made it before - of minimizing him. Usually there's some very real pain for somebody in the wake of his intentions. Just don't minimize so much.

VISITOR

on the verge of what you're about to learn - not to mention what you think you're about to learn -

METEOROLOGIST

How can I even spare the boy a thought - right? But I'm no stranger to that description he spoke of - that contemplating the other as hard as he begins to see what the mirror retains. The mirror isn't

giving back any enchantment right now.

VISITOR

Or, if the mirror means Peterfire, Peterfire's been brought round.

METEOROLOGIST

(begins to set up the generator, center)

Not to the point where any joy took him. He doesn't sound like there's much in it for him, you know? You did make it clear, that this was the end of his problem, this was certainty?

VISITOR

I promised him a certified report - can I give you a hand with that?

METEOROLOGIST

You can set up the instruments, if you would: the barometer, anemometer and rainfall gauge - over there, please, against the other wall.

(During the following, the VISITOR sets up the three instruments, spacing them evenly along the downstage edge of the stage in the order, from stage left: rainfall gauge, anemometer, barometer, so that the instrument panels face away from the audience. Each instrument is topped by a red light bulb.)

I don't know how enchanted Peter would be with a certified report.

VISITOR

One that freed him?

METEOROLOGIST

but could he ever recognize it as freeing him?

VISITOR

I don't think that was the problem...

METEOROLOGIST

But rather?

VISITOR

This feeling he's got: anything learned will wind up being learned

at your expense.

METEOROLOGIST

(stopping work on generator)

Any on earth?

VISITOR

Well, your getting him his storm back - he doesn't forget what's implicit in that. For you, implicit.

METEOROLOGIST

And that seems to be making what you would call a crucial difference to him?

VISITOR

Ah, Doctor, I'm not such an authority on Peterfire!

METEOROLOGIST

Well, I rely on your impressions.

VISITOR

Yes, I know you do, as does he; and from them, the both of you go on to build all kinds of attitudes. You never come any nearer each other than peering down into my mind. We need to take a sounding, apparently: you can find it all in me. But I'm getting impatient trying to alert either of you to the subtleties I've found going on in the other. I've gone between and between, but don't let that start making me a go-between in your eyes.

METEOROLOGIST

It's really, I assure ^{you,} _A not the light in which you present yourself. Are the instruments ready?

VISITOR

Ready.

METEOROLOGIST

and the generator's set -

VISITOR

What, here?

METEOROLOGIST

Right where you see it.

VISITOR

But you have all the doors and windows shut!

METEOROLOGIST

Oh, it'll find it's way up. We're pretty open to the wind and weather here.

VISITOR

You want to give me a copy of the death-storm figures and I'll run the check?

METEOROLOGIST

That won't do now we'll do it. Each instrument has been preset to light up when it reads the death storm conditions, and stay lit so long as those conditions hold. The last test in the in-
imitable waterspout and that'll be all over the sky, we won't need any instruments.

VISITOR

Start the generator?

METEOROLOGIST

Have to wait some time to get to the headland?

VISITOR

(goes to the window and looks out)

Yes, there he is, Beach heading. It never takes never very long to get to the headland.

METEOROLOGIST

we really have to be very careful, leaving time for the the aiming
to take, for the flames to reach just that level of brightness -

VISITOR

(in a tone of arch reproach)

Doc - cor...

METEOROLOGIST

I'm trying to put the momentousness from my mind!

VISITOR

That shouldn't be hard. A man alone in the middle of the south
atlantic, starting to lay an illusion down...

METEOROLOGIST

You know that view has no life in it for me.

VISITOR

well, it's to correct that little imbalance we're having our exper-
ment.

METEOROLOGIST

You see now you give yourself away as imbalanced the other way.
And as much as anything, it must be fear makes the imbalance.

VISITOR

fear?

METEOROLOGIST

You don't forget what could be ahead for you?

VISITOR

Oh, well, if it's my mistake, we've arranged that too, haven't
we?

METEOROLOGIST

successor!

VISITOR

(with blunt annoyance)

ah, flick it on, will you?

(METEOROLOGIST makes a frustrated, hesitating gesture: he wants to, he can't.)

All right, I will then.

(The VISITOR starts to move toward the generator, but the METEOROLOGIST interposes, kneels down by the generator and holds its bow in his hand for a moment. Then he flicks a switch and at once a thin, straight stream of vapor begins to ascend. The sky darkens suddenly.)

METEOROLOGIST

(in an intense, desperate whisper, but as if only half-conscious of his words.)

Carry it up! Get it out of here!

VISITOR

what?

METEOROLOGIST

(startled)

ah?

VISITOR

what are you whispering?

METEOROLOGIST

oh, was I? It must have been prayers of some kind. Prayers are all I whisper.

VISITOR

prayers now?

METEOROLOGIST

Oh, it was just the smoke going by, giving me the opportunity. You know. If a bottle floated by your rail, you'd stick a dove in it.

VISITOR

You're doing an experiment, will you get up off your haunches.

(METEOROLOGIST gets up; difficult pause.)

Could we do anything while we're waiting?

METEOROLOGIST

There was another thing I wanted to ask about Peterfire -

VISITOR

All, leave Peterfire, can't you! Wait till I'm gone, I'm sure you'll have plenty to talk about, the two of you.

METEOROLOGIST

well, then, as we have until some leisure to dispose of, let us picture the upward journey of this vapor, through troposphere, stratosphere and ionosphere, piercing at last into the belly of a dotting cloud -

(sound of heavy rain)

VISITOR

That isn't rain?

METEOROLOGIST

(to himself, with secret excitement)

It's starting...

VISITOR

Your crystals can't be up there waiting.

METEOROLOGIST

Yes they can - if they get caught in an updraft, for instance.

(A bell rings, and the red light on the chronometer goes on. Rain noises continue.)

VISITOR

Launched...

METEOROLOGIST

reading the level of the death-storm.

VISITOR

and still falling. And still falling.

METEOROLOGIST

we've got one-quarter of the death-storm.

VISITOR

That's just the thing you mustn't say! The barometer hit a certain level - that's what you have to leave it at.

METEOROLOGIST

Do I have to leave it at that?

VISITOR

all right, but to make it sound like a step along the way -

(Loud wind noises begin; anemometer begins slowly to
 to turn. Bell rings and red light on the rainfall-gauge
 goes on. Rain noises continue.)

METEOROLOGIST

These clouds have sent down as much rain as the death-storm.

VISITOR

at least as much. It's still teeming; there could be twice this.

(rain noises taper off abruptly.)

METEOROLOGIST

and it stops. Two elemental forces have left their opinion. We
 are half way into the death-storm.

VISITOR

Stop yourself, throw anything in the way of the wind before it
 begins to move toward this.

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METEOROLOGIST

it's beginning to look like I'm not the one in any danger from my thoughts. But if you were to start thinking them,

(wind noises begin to get louder and higher in pitch; anemometer is turning faster and faster.)

what pageantry would begin to wind out from that second statistic! Your wooden chair is getting golden; your dexterity is fading as the crowns and jewels materialize around you, as the back-breaking sceptres are given into your grasp. I have a moment of twittering about in rags - and then back to willing the clouds around.

VISITOR

The madness is turning you, and you let it!

METEOROLOGIST

We don't use that word any more. It doesn't explain now, it just tempts - and with a temptation you've ended all my hopes of being privy to.

VISITOR

Why are you talking like this? Where do you think you are? This is supposed to be an experiment you're in the midst of.

METEOROLOGIST

This was supposed to be an humiliation, but it's turning into an experiment. And here come some results, bringing you where you never thought to come, and bringing me exaltation - only, on a spear's point.

VISITOR

Don't ever now try and deny it: you're enchanted! Though you creak about problems and terrors and burdens, you're enchanted, you're loving it!

METEOROLOGIST

Oh, you really are uncomprehending, you're all blank spaces! I never saw such incomprehension.

(wind noises begin to gather into one high, shrill note; the anemometer is turning so fast as to be blurred.)

You couldn't let me cry that one cry of exaltation before the gale rolls over everything.

(bell rings; and red light on the anemometer goes on.)

There it is! Prince of the air!

VISITOR

That's three conditions. All right. Three out of how many?

METEOROLOGIST

But murderer! All those lives back under my sway again, and all my personal dead taking up their clamor... It's on me, and it's never coming off any more, not even for the space of a fleeting instant. No more question...!

VISITOR

You didn't even fix instruments for the temperature and wind-speed.

(A rainbow of colors floods through the window. The METEOROLOGIST rushes to the window.)

Look at it there, all irrefragable, the prismatic water-pot that never showed its face on this earth but that one day, when I brought it out again. The death-storm has been exactly recreated.

VISITOR

I'm finding a way out!

METEOROLOGIST

Not now, you're in the other track now, where we try and find the world a way out.

(turning back at the window)

I can't take my eyes off it: if a horror, it's at least a bright

and all-confirming one, putting down primary colors all over the volcanic rock, and the water, and the headland -
referrers' gone!

VISITOR

where would he go?

METEOROLOGIST

There he is - kneeling on the beach, by the wreckage of his father's boat. Now he's running it down to the water - he's put out to sea.

(The colored light fades.)

That's the end of seeing anything, here comes the fog.

(When realizing the danger)

The fog!

VISITOR

I can't think what he wants out there.

METEOROLOGIST

he'll be carried onto the cliffs, he can't see in this fog.

VISITOR

he seemed delighted to be getting a report..

METEOROLOGIST

what difference is that? I have to do something..

VISITOR

Then lift it.

METEOROLOGIST

what?

VISITOR

As master - now unquestioned master - of the world's fogs.

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METEOROLOGIST

this is to get me to fail and you'll free yourself.

VISITOR

I certainly have more of a stake now, but - you fail?

METEOROLOGIST

how would I ever do it?

VISITOR

I don't know; how did you do any of it?

METEOROLOGIST

I don't have an instrument left.

VISITOR

The will. The giant will of the world's weather.

METEOROLOGIST

But just to go ahead and do it...

VISITOR

are you going to be like the convivope - bundled in knots from thinking what a mechanism he was? how does this moment differ from all the other moments that went into your conviction? does what-you-can become so formidable when it presents itself as what-you-must?

METEOROLOGIST

(clutching his fists and screwing up his eyes)

it's to clear - get that? Clear!

(VISITOR takes up his position at the window.)

VISITOR

it rages on.

METEOROLOGIST

As master of winds, I call on winds to blow this fog away. As

master of sun, I call on the sun to burn this fog away. As
master of the blue skies, I insist on a reassertion against this fog.

VISITOR

heavier.

METEOROLOGIST

By powers I do not understand, I call on powers which do. You
gave a mastery you knew unwelcome: be careful of giving one chance
to slip free. If I'm going to be powerless for the good I will,
then no more pains for me, I'm through suffering. Consider if
that's what you really want, to leave me that free; and if not,
get those skies clear!

VISITOR

It hides the world.

(All the red lights go off, and the winds die out.
Silence. METEOROLOGIST rights over the generator.)

METEOROLOGIST

With there is no master here! - Not from the moment I've said: I place
those clouds, there isn't.

(Closing his eyes, as when he prays.)

You had a chance, and one chance of my lifetime you let it glow
into. Now mastery and delusion fall away to either side, and I
come in free.

VISITOR

And I free, too.

METEOROLOGIST

You! The contriver of the death-storm is talking about being free
again? Ah, one thought of you brings all the clouds back! ~~again!~~

VISITOR

I took away =

METEOROLOGIST

Oh, maybe it turns out I didn't drown worlds of men =

VISITOR

I gave you that!

METEOROLOGIST

= but that it should be the blood of Peterkin I read my innocence in - what kind of innocence is that? Any guilt you took away, you replaced it with vigorous new guilt. And where is the mitigation going to come from this time?

VISITOR

Look, you know, he could still be alive. Why aren't you doing something?

METEOROLOGIST

Like kicking up some more weather, for instance?

VISITOR

I mean, get the D. V. C. on the radio and have them look for him.

METEOROLOGIST

(suddenly getting an idea)

what I could do, is take the megaphone down onto the beach and call out some bearings to him...

(he picks up electric megaphone and begins to leave.)

VISITOR

And I'll contact the D. V. C. ?

METEOROLOGIST

(on his way out the outside door)

You can't, the microphone's broken: only incoming calls on that radio.

(He opens the door and storm noises can be heard again. He goes out, leaving the door open. Storm noises continue.)

VISITOR

When he knew it a lie, I could never have radioed those instructions, and he had to see for himself, I made him have to, I drove him onto that ocean - the Visitation Craft was never in the running. But I was the Dolomite observer here, was all. How did I get it all on me like this? I should have answers ready...

(Bright static indicates that the radio has come on.)

PETERFIRE's voice

(over the radio)

I do not know in what corner of the world my voice is at this moment sounding strangely. But know now beyond all question, it was not I!

(static)

VISITOR

That was Peterfire...

PETERFIRE's voice

The Visitor gave himself away, and anyhow, I could never be content with the word of Dolomites; but it was only, seeing that waterspout convinced me, here was recreation exact and worth sailing into.

(static)

METEOROLOGIST's voice

(at a distance, over the electric megaphone)

Peter! Are you alive? Are you alive?

PETERFIRE's voice

I was packed out of the waves by the Dolomite Visitation Craft Satarico, from the deck of which, in the exact position my father sent down, I could not see the beacon I'd lighted!

(static)

VISITOR

But my sounds all right - saved, he sounds! Can I have salvaged at least that one?

(goes over to the radio so as not to miss a word)

PETERFIKE'S voice

So I have sneaked into the transmission room and come on the radio to say, that it was not I!

(static)

METEOROLOGIST'S voice

Come back, Peter - maybe even if it would mean the world's weather again. What chance have I got of this being a delusion?

VISITOR

Some, Doctor; a good.

PETERFIKE'S voice

I am steaming farther and farther from the Doctor and his island. I shall never revisit the South Atlantic.

(static)

VISITOR

Why what?

METEOROLOGIST'S voice

Maybe at this moment you're screaming to get on top of the storm. Keep trying, Peter! I'd have balked the uncertainty for the rest of my days.

PETERFIKE'S voice

I can never see the Doctor again. I have gone - been Delomite-driven - from wishing him whole to not daring to know. Maybe I walked out - in fact, there's no question of it. But I have my innocence now, that

changes things - and have it out of that storm. And if he's gone and got stuck with the world's weather, I'm sorry, I'm heartily sorry, but I'm afraid that's become the condition of it.

(static)

VISITOR

(picking up microphone and speaking into it)

But I can't tell him you're free thinking he made weather. What about his innocence, that all comes out of thinking he couldn't?

METEOROLOGIST'S voice

That I dared my way to innocence and then it went up in blood - is that what's going to come clobbering to the surface in the mat hair of Peter-Illy?

PETER-ILLY'S voice

I certainly never have been very understanding - although, what was any callousness then compared to this callousness now? But who would have thought it, after eight years indistinguishable from raving? And then came the waterspout, coloring things...

(static)

VISITOR

But he couldn't pull the storm back, he hadn't any control in the end, you don't -

(slams the microphone onto the desk, shattering it)

Ah, damn, why doesn't this thing work!

(into microphone)

but lucky for you you don't hear me.

METEOROLOGIST'S voice

Too much swirling between us. You could be ten feet away, but I don't even see the ocean any more. Everything's out of sight. We're apart.

PETERFIRE'S voice

But even with the waterpout, it's all fantastically delicate, so gorgeous and unlikely that I can't lift a finger; because, if it all slides away, Doctor - your misery with your power - then the flames'll go on around Peterfire again.

METEOROLOGIST'S voice

(at a great distance)

Peter...!

PETERFIRE'S voice

O my Doctor! But I don't dare see into it the least bit deeper. I have to stay with what I could get.

VISITOR

(switches the radio onto another wave-length. Static. He grabs the scattered microphone.)

This station must be closed! This station must be closed!

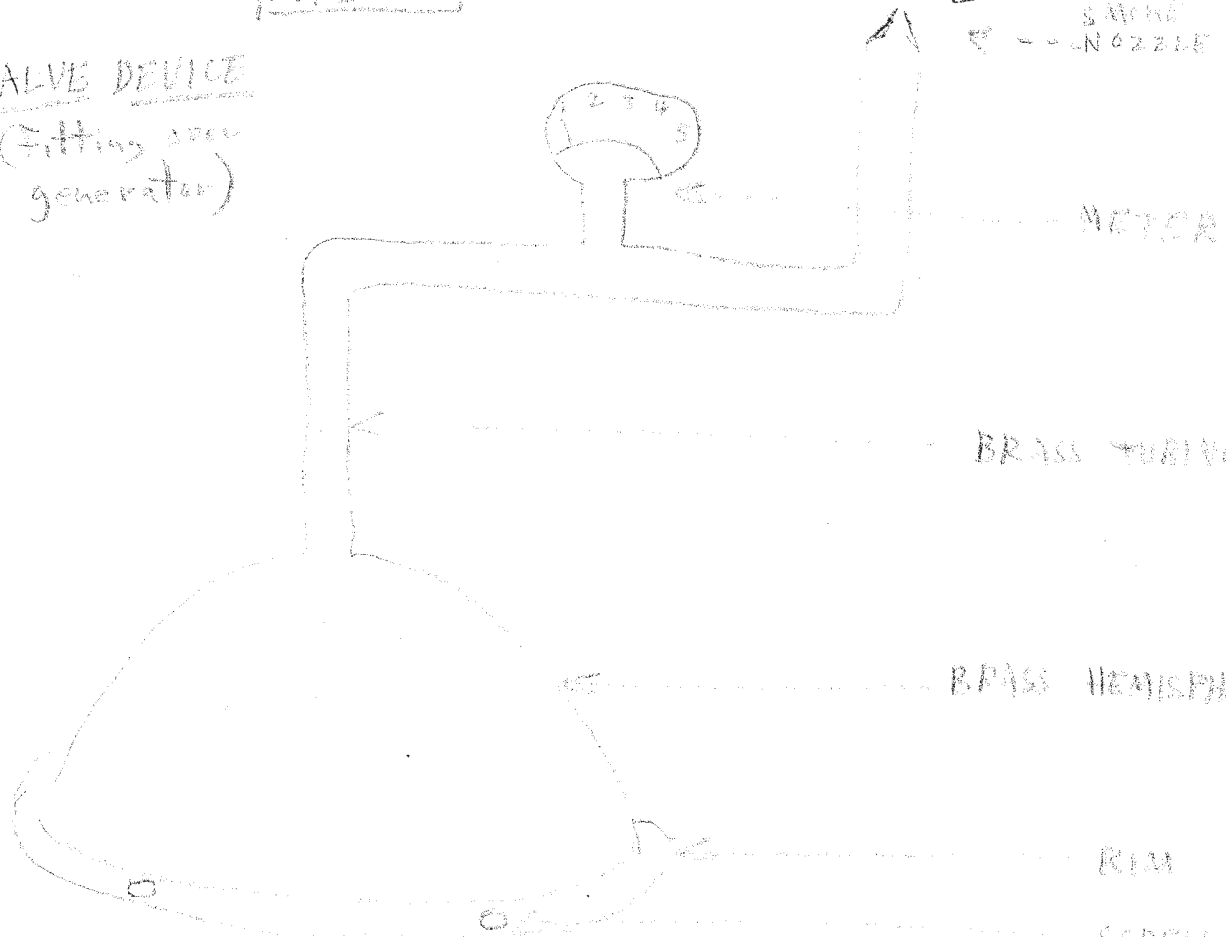
(heavy static. Curtain.)

APPENDIX

1.81

VALVE DEVICE
(Fitting over generator)

5 MM NOZZLE



METER

BRASS TURBINE

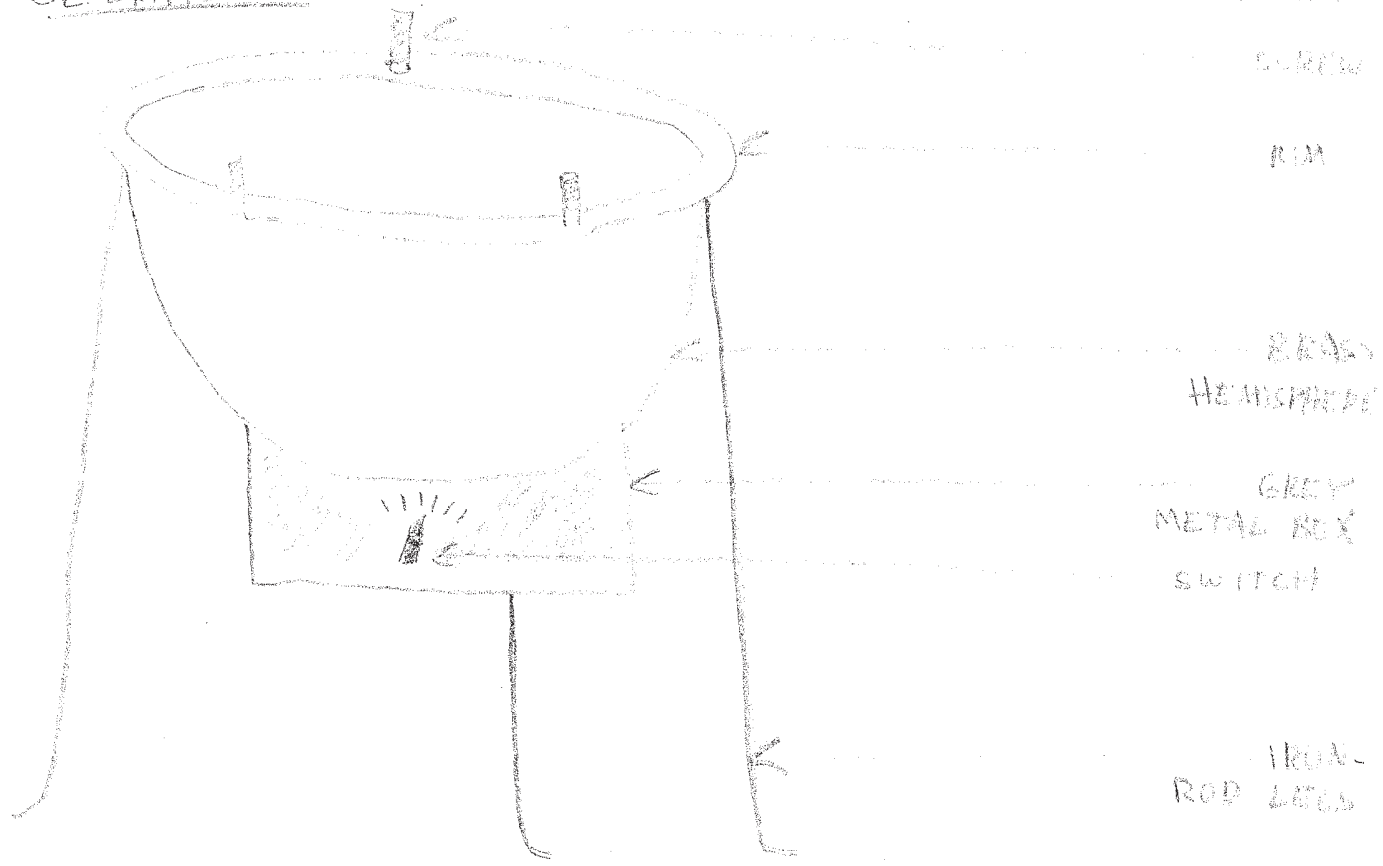
BRASS HEMISPHERE

RIM

SCREW HOLES

FOR RECEIVING SCREWS ON GENERATOR RIM

OXIDE GENERATOR



SCREW

RIM

BRASS HEMISPHERE

GREY METAL BOX SWITCH

IRON-ROD LEGS