Howard Feigenbaum and Michelle Benoit

Joel Aaron Smith

The University of Montana

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation
Smith, Joel Aaron, "Howard Feigenbaum and Michelle Benoit" (1973). Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers, 2604.
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/2604

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.
HOWARD FEIGENBAUM AND MICHELLE BENOIT

by

Joel Smith

B.A., University of Illinois, 1963

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of
Master of Fine Arts
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

1973

APPROVED BY:

[Signatures]

Lena Callaghan
Chairman, Board of Examiners

Date

May 1, 1973

John T. Stewart
Dean, Graduate School
Once upon a time there was a young man who knew more words than anyone else in the world.

This condition began when he was a boy. His mother and father and even all of their friends agreed that he was exceptionally intelligent; and, the more people said that, and thought that, the more words he learned. When he was nine years old he was saying things like: "Given the improbability of consequential entropy vis a vis the ambiguous function of the compulsive ritual, the transference of various psychic syndromes can be expected over and beyond nothing else like it in the world."

"Wow!" was not an uncommon response to that sort of thing—so that this youngster, whose name, incidentally, was Howard Donald Feigenbaum, loving the impression he was making, and the attention he was getting, determined to learn even more words. And he was successful in this respect. People were saying: He's a genius! and so on and so forth.

A recruiter for a major university heard of Howard and came to visit him one day (when he was ten), and Howard said, "Despite certain incongruities demonstrated by ossified thought systems, in keeping with the theory of entropy, the affective contamination of conscious minds predominated by intellection can occur only insofar as they are permitted to by the gross national budget." This sounded good to the
recruiter, who thought it sounded somehow . . . affirmative—
so he recruited Howard then and there, on the spot, while How­
ard's parents looked on proudly at this great moment in their
lives.

The young genius loved the university. The only thing
that distressed him was that he could not major in everything.
He loved literature--especially when the prose was turgid. He
was also drawn to the study of law because law was full of words
like whereas, and hereinafter; it contained new words like tort,
and writ, and in addition thereto, had plenty of Latin phrases
like caveat emptor, and non compes mentes. But finally he
settled on science. Science, he decided, would make him happi­
est because not only could one juggle prefixes, and suffixes
in Science--not to mention the Latin middles--but one could
actually make up one's words.

And so, Howard Feigenbaum became a scientist. With
his customary detachment he became narrowing down the choices
of the kind of science he wished to specialize in--for the
more of a specialist you were, he learned, the more esoteric
the vocabulary you used. Accordingly, first he was a biolo­
gist, then an anthropologist, then a physiological anthropolo­
gist, and then a psychocerebral physiological anthropologist.

When he was seventeen years old, Howard D. Feigenbaum
received a Ph.D. from a prominent Ivy League university. Be­
cause he had remained intellectually ambitious--even avari-
scious—throughout his entire high school and university life, reading very varied material, and even knew a fair amount of German, French, Latin, Greek, and Russian (and knew, to a lesser extent, Hebrew, Yiddish, and Sanskrit), and was mad for crossword puzzles and Scrabble, and was, finally, a veritable gourmand of words—had someone been in a position to choose the man who knew the most words in the whole world, Howard Feigenbaum might very well have received the prize.

Now before going any further, it may be necessary to make clear the fact that, withal, Howard was just a kid. He didn't even look at a girl until he was sixteen, and even then, what he saw, mostly, was a specimen, or a type. If you were to ask him what he thought about sex, when he was fifteen he might have said, "Mammarys, pubic hair, genitalia: big deal! Mere physiology." (and then launch into an incomparable paragraph) At sixteen, it is true, he was becoming unsettled by this mere physiology, but he had his thesis to work on and had, therefore, little time to be unsettled. There could no longer be any doubt about it, however, by the time he was 17: he was caught up, like so many young men, in a chronic state of confusing frustration.

This frustration, this disconcerting truth which originated—unreasonably—not in the mind at all, but in the gonads—was lessened temporarily with the news that Howard's bid for post-doctorate study with Dr. Michelle Benoit in Tahiti had
been approved; so Howard, excited, naturally, prepared to leave his parents, his alma mater, and . . . that "sexy black haired girl" he'd been noticing and noticing (he'd never so much as said the word "sexy," but he'd thought it recently, and coming as it did, the word, unbidden, to his mind, he'd perspired). Soon he would be doing research under one of the most prominent psycho-physical anthropologists in the world.

Arriving in the airport of the fabled paradise known as Tahiti, Howard stood wondering what to do next. Howard suddenly heard someone behind him say something that may have been the word Feigenbaum. Howard turned around, and was confronted by a short, dark, middle aged man; mostly Polynesian, probably some French blood, and possibly some Chinese, as well. He looked pleasant enough as he repeated the sound Howard had heard a moment before. It was a question. Howard decided he was saying "Feigenbaum?." Howard said yes, he was Dr. Feigenbaum. The man smiled, and nodded. He gestured for a cab, and then, opening the door for Howard, he said something to the driver in Polynesian, picked up Howard's luggage, and followed him into the back seat, whereupon he slammed the door, and the vehicle was launched.

Along the way, Howard pressed the man for an explanation—none was forthcoming. The only effort he made to answer Howard's questions was to say, "Dr. Benoit" and gesture that Howard should come with him, he was taking Howard to Dr. Benoit. "Some receptionist," Howard thought, darkly.
They arrived very quickly at Papeete's Custom Wharf. Because Howard was absorbed in thought, he didn't see very much on the way. He might have seen a multi-racial population going to work along the Quai du Commerce, where signs are written in French, Polynesian, Chinese, and even Hindi. He might have seen in the harbor outrigger canoes, millionaire's yachts, a French warship, and various looking, various sized dinghies. He might have seen vendors selling tropical fruit at their portable stands. But he was distraught, somewhat at a loss, because there was, as far as he was concerned, no communication going on. What, he wondered, was what?

Now let us praise older women. Dr. Michelle Benoit was a wonderful woman of forty-five. Born in Lyon, France, the second daughter of a banker, she grew up to be a very attractive, very smart, very French girl. It was in Paris, while a student at the Sorbonne, when she met an American banker who persuaded her to transfer to Princeton, in which town, it happened, he happened to live. She went to Princeton, living like few co-eds ever do, and earned a Master's degree in Anthropology. She graduated from Princeton, the university, the town, and the banker, all at the same time. Fortunately, she had met another benefactor, the president of a large advertising company in New York, and so she lived very nicely in New York as she attended the New School for Social Research—which, incidentally, culminated in a Ph.D. (for she was no dummy), and
also terminated her *raison d'etre* in the luxurious apartment on Sutton Place.

Michelle Benoit had grown up to become Dr. Benoit: green-eyed, strong willed, and thoroughly French.

While Michelle's lovers had thought themselves the most fortunate of men, what they didn't know was that she cheated on them—in other words, she was actually even more passionate than they imagined. And her taste ran to men far younger than they. She had also indulged in drugs, and on several occasions participated in sado-masochistic sexual goings-on. While she was without racial prejudice, and completely indiscriminate regarding her companions during this period, she was, nonetheless, politically, and in other ways, conservative.

She taught for a brief time only—although during that time she enjoyed excellent relations with a number of students. Mostly she did research. Her research took her all over the world, enabling her to have lovers from Albania to the Upper Volta. This year her research had brought her to French Polynesia, on the island of Rapa, not far from Tahiti.

When she'd learned of the island of Rapa from an old missionary who had tried to save the souls of the Polynesians there, the place had sounded ideal to her. He'd said that he'd been unsuccessful proselytizing there: the people had been too simple and happy. And, among other things, he said
that out of a population of 2,000 (if damned) souls, 1,500 of them were men—at least, that's what she thought he said. As it turned out, 1,500 of those souls belonged to women, or about three women for every man. And since the culture and mores of this unspoiled, happy people were what they were, the women gave their love readily, and the men took it, and all were happy.

Now, in her forty-fifth year, crows feet quite visible around her green eyes, her once magnificent derriere sagging slightly, this white woman, thin by local standards, was for the first time in 28 years going without! She had been chaste since her arrival on Rapa—more or less. Tioti, the man who'd met Howard at the airport had shared her bed, but unfortunately, he was well nigh impotent.

Dr. Benoit's theory was that people all over the world, regardless of their mother tongue, could communicate—an Albanian to an Eskimo, for example—exclusively by body language, since body language was universal. In pursuance thereof, Dr. Benoit visited and conducted research in more than 100 countries. Ignorant as she was of the languages spoken by the people she did her research upon, it made for a dramatic field experiment: she would communicate with the natives, neither knowing what the other was talking about. Dr. Benoit maintained non-verbal communication was extremely important: people living in the same country, or even the household rarely knew what
the other person was talking about, anyway. Dr. Benoit's methods were necessarily informal and it was her methodology which brought her a certain amount of criticism in the scientific community. Nevertheless, with the determined attitude which was so characteristic of Michelle Benoit, she made her theory her life work, and year after year collected evidence to support it.

(It was rumored that the foundations, governments, universities, and organizations which funded and encouraged her, were generally amazed at both the quantity, and the quality of the material in Dr. Benoit's notes on sexuality among the Shona, or the Ainu, or whomever; and almost always the published chapter dealing with sexuality was abridged or even suppressed. Dr. Benoit, at least according to certain rumors, had the reputation of being, along with certain other dynamic aspects of personality, something of a lech. But Howard hadn't even heard the whisper of a rumor.)

The small launch bearing Howard, and Tioti, arrived in the bay of the island of Rapa in the late afternoon when the heat was being replaced by the warmth. Dr. Benoit was down on the beach, along with twenty or thirty Polynesians, to greet Howard as he stepped out of the boat into the Pacific, and then onto the beach.

"Dr. Feigenbaum, I presume?" she said, smiling, and extending her hand.
"Yes," Howard said, thinking: *Did she have a French accent?* He shook her hand (even as he stood in the surf which, unknowing and not caring who he was, what was happening, and what was going to happen, rolled over his good shoes). He noted her great green eyes, her black hair, and her resolute jaw, and decided that she inspired confidence. He also noted that her blouse was pretty much unbuttoned, *(Oh, well, that's understandable, he thought; it's pretty hot around here)* and that the doctor was indeed a lady. Well, she certainly was a woman, anyhow. She was wearing shorts and no shoes. Maybe her legs were getting a little stringy, but all in all, she could still inspire in men more than confidence. Just what she inspired, in addition to confidence, and how she did it, Howard wasn't quite sure; but if our genius didn't know exactly what he was feeling, he was alert enough to know that something was up. The air in the south seas affects all men.

Dr. Benoit said, "Frankly, I am happy to welcome you to Rapa. Because the situation is as it is here on the island, I need a man to help me."

"I understand," Howard said. "It has to do with the segregation of the sexes?"

She laughed. Howard suddenly thought she may have been on the island too long. That could be worrisome . . .

"Come," Dr. Benoit said. "Perhaps it is not too late to save your shoes."
He started to follow her, and then remembered his bags. She told him not to worry: Tioti would take care of them.

"I trust you had a good journey here?" she asked, as they walked up the beach through white sand.

"Yes," Howard answered. The Polynesians were following them, laughing, and calling to one another in their native tongue. Up ahead Howard could see a clearing in which perhaps a dozen grass huts, or shacks, stood under tall palm trees, the leaves of which blew gently in the wind. I answered "Yes", Howard thought. Why don't I tell her more? I'd better say more, or she may judge me phlegmatic.

Now, as unaccustomed as Howard was to giving one word answers, he was even more unaccustomed to the scene he suddenly found himself in.

They walked into the clearing, the camp area. There was a good deal of shade, which undulated, actually, as a result of a light breeze moving the palm leaves overhead. There is usually perfume in the air in the south Pacific; however, the particular scent varies with the time of year. There was the frequent sound of their laughter and their local Polynesian dialect being spoken; and finally there was the sound of the ever constant surf. This month, the scent of frangipani was carried by the breeze. The temperature was in the low 80's, and it was humid, although not uncomfortably so.

Howard didn't have time to think about the weather,
much less the people. Dr. Benoit was saying, "Let's sit down and talk a bit." She sat on a chair and he couldn't see anything to sit down on.

And she said, "It looks like you'll have to sit on the ground. You don't mind, do you?"

And he replied, "Oh, no," and sat down awkwardly.

"Good," she said. "Now then: you'll find that I don't waste many words, Dr. Feigenbaum. Ultimately, I believe that words are useless. Indeed, privately, I feel that words impose restrictions and handicaps upon us—but that's just privately. What I am trying to prove with my work is that we can virtually get along without them. No value judgement there. I'm going to talk to you today because I know you need to know what the situation is and you need words to understand it. Right now you do. After today, you'll find me a good deal more reticent. Talking is a luxury I've learned to do without. Are you comfortable?"

"Oh, yes," he said.

"Good. Now I should like to make everything perfectly clear, and I will try to answer any questions you may have about our project here."

Howard forced himself to concentrate. Ignore the fact that you are sitting on the ground (which includes a few little stones) below a strange, authoritative woman, who is only half dressed and . . . sexy, even if she is old enough to be your
mother; ignore the fact that you're in the south seas, and the bottom of your trousers are wet, and your shoes are wet and full of sand, and you're wearing a seersucker suit, and this is your first job, and you must make good.

"My work, as you know, is concerned with universal body language, or non-verbal communication. In order to understand this language—for it is a language—one must be receptive. Without receiving messages there is no communication—only broadcasting. Reception is marred when there are words occupying the mind. Do you follow me so far?"

"Of course," he answered briskly. What's this?! he thought, uneasy.

"Therefore," she continued, "you must rid your mind of words. They are the enemy here! We cultivate intuition here, not concepts." She paused to let it all sink in. Howard said nothing: he was in shock. "Verbiage is garbage here. Do you understand?"

Howard could not reply. But he could swallow, and he did, twice. And he cleared his throat.

"Dr. Feigenbaum, I chose you rather than a good many other applicants to be my assistant here on Rapa for two reasons. Would you like to hear them?"

Howard nodded.

"First, your background was very interesting. You are a qualified scientist, and I think the fact that you come from
a discipline somewhat different from my own will be useful in my project, and moreover, should benefit you as well. Secondly, Doctor, your reputation preceded you. In your letters of recommendation, one of the men you worked under called you articulate beyond belief; another man called you garulous; a third said you rarely answered a question in less than a paragraph. Well, now: so far, I must say, you've not struck me as being any of those things, however, I dare say, given the opportunity you will. I'll be quite frank about it: I've decided to make you a part of the experiment. . . . What do you think of that?"

"I'm at a loss . . . for words," he replied, dully.

Dr. Benoit smiled. "You are making a liar out of the three gentlemen who recommended you."

Howard just nodded.

A Polynesian appeared, wearing only a pareu around his loins. He held two coconuts, cut open by a machete, with straws emerging, and presented one to Dr. Benoit, with a smile, and the other to Howard, also with a smile. Then he turned and went away before Howard could say, "Thank you," or "Merci," or whatever it is they say in Polynesia.

Dr. Benoit sipped the coconut juice, and thought about her new associate sitting on the ground before her. She preferred young men; that's why she'd chosen him from the list of 24 candidates for the job. She saw a young man who was thin,
tall, dark, and handsome, and she liked that. But his face: My God, she thought, he looks like he's fourteen years old! He's a baby! This time I'll really be robbing the cradle.

"Do you like it?" she asked, kindly.

He nodded.

Poor dear, she thought. He must be in shock. And she was right.

"You mustn't worry about your role in the work we're doing here. I have no doubt that you'll contribute to the program, and that soon enough we'll both be glad you came."

Howard sipped his coconut juice. He wondered if he should say something. But what could he say? It was as if his computer were jammed, or as if he had blown a fuse. So he sat there numb and dumb.

"What I'd like you to do initially, Doctor, is nothing. You'll be here in this camp with other people around, but you'll not be able to talk to them since you don't know their language—and they don't know yours. I want it that way. I'll be gone the better part of the day. In fact, that'll be my schedule for the next two or three weeks. I'm spending my time in a small village about five kilometers from here."

She pulled out a pack of Galois cigarettes, and lit one, looking thoroughly French—especially when she exhaled the smoke through her nostrils.

Even as the smoke came down through her nostrils, she was saying, "I don't want you to learn the language here: that
would work contrary to the intents of our work here. You may try to communicate. I think it's inevitable that you'll try—anyone would—since you'll be needing help, or information, or something, like a fishing hook, for example. Use body language, Doctor, and sign language. I've been using it for years. It's really quite amazing. I've used it in most of the world, and I think I've become quite good at it, if I do say so, myself. Tomorrow you begin your apprenticeship. You will, if you'll excuse my humor, be giving up one kind of BS in favor of another. When you are working with Dr. Benoit, BS means body and sign language. Because BS is not always a precise language, one necessarily learns a greater sense of self-reliance, and one comes to appreciate the gifts of the senses more. Those are two very worthwhile bonuses, I think you'll agree."

There was a very long pause, during which time Dr. Benoit sipped some more coconut juice, and waited for Howard to reply. When he didn't she said, "Come now, Doctor; I'm sure you have something you'd like to say."

"I, uh, I just don't know what to say," he declared.

"Well, then," she said, "if you have nothing to say . . ."

"I don't understand," Howard claimed, hesitantly. He understood, all right, if not completely: what he meant was: Would you please speak again, but say it differently, and better for me this time. "Am I to assume," he said, "that what
you require from me is my ignorance, my needs, and my, my... I don't know what else?"

"Yes," Dr. Benoit smiled archly. "And you'll soon find out what else, Dr. Feigenbaum."

"But why me? Dr. Benoit? Anybody could do what you're asking of me."

"All in good time, Doctor," she replied, putting her hand over Howard's to reassure him. "We're going to be working together for the next seven months: it's important that you trust me." With her great green eyes she caught his, and tried to say something to him.

But Howard wasn't buying. "Yes, but, . . . ." he protested.

"But nothing," Dr. Benoit interrupted. "At this moment you understand nothing."

"That's what I said!" Howard said; and, of course, he was right.

"But you will in time," Dr. Benoit told him, calmly. "One of the first lessons an anthropologist learns is that things are very often different from what they seem."

"That very well may be, Doctor, but I thought it was very clear when I wrote you . . . ."

Dr. Benoit interrupted again. "Yes, yes, I know." After a brief pause, she said, "Doctor, this is your first time out in the field, is it not?"
Howard admitted that it was.

"Well, then, I suggest you listen more, and protest less; much less. You are very fortunate to be here, you know. It is a job requiring immense sensitivity, and tact; and the right man could learn a great deal from these people, and, if I may say so, from me."

"Yes, Doctor, but all things being equal, given the...

"We'll talk no more about it for now. Tioti will show you to your quarters, and you will dine with me this evening at eight. We have a good deal more to talk about, but words are tiresome, and I am tired now. At eight o'clock then." She stood up, and held out her hand. Howard took it, and slowly shook it. Surprised, and frustrated by the abrupt termination of his first discussion with the person who was to be his mentor, he exited.

Dinner was: coconut, breadfruit, sweet potato, fish, taro, pig popoi, corned beef, and 'ape.

"Corned beef?" Howard asked, tasting it.

"Yes," Dr. Benoit answered. "It comes in tins from New Zealand."

A few minutes before, Dr. Benoit had informed Howard that his little grass shack had a name, and he asked her what the name was, and she said fare iti, which means: the outhouse. When he asked her what that meant, she said, "Do
you recall what I said earlier? I don't want you to learn any Polynesian words. I want you completely unable to communicate—verbally—with the people—except me, that's part of the reason you're here—so never ask me what this word means, or how do you say such and such. Do I make myself clear?" And Howard, who couldn't understand anything without having it repeated, or without paraphrasing it himself, answered no, not exactly.

"Dr. Feigenbaum," Dr. Benoit began. And she began sternly—this, despite the fact that she'd already drunk two goblets of wine. (One might reasonably expect a middle aged woman to mellow a bit with two goblets of wine in her belly, but Dr. Benoit was made of sterner stuff.) "Dr. Feigenbaum, you have read some of my work, have you not?"

"Well," Howard said.

"And I am correct in assuming, am I not, that you know what we are doing here?"

"Oh . . . ," Howard said.

"Yes?"

"Ah, yes," Howard replied back. Smiling, Dr. Benoit said, "Have some popoi, Doctor."

"What's that?" Howard asked.

"I'm not going to tell you, Doctor," she responded, still smiling, insincerely.

"Oh, of course," Howard stammered. "Uh, if you don't
mind I think I'll sample a bit of that item," Howard said, and pointed.

"Very good," she said, and handed him the dish.

"Taste it. See if you know what it is."

Howard tasted it. "Corned beef?" he asked.

"Yes," Dr. Benoit answered. "It comes in tins from New Zealand."

The two doctors were dining in Dr. Benoit's shack, which, closer inspection revealed, wasn't really a shack at all; it was a limestone house with an iron roof (corregated, with thatched palm leaves on top of it), windows, doors, a mirror, and a big brass bed. There was also a cook and housekeeper, and her name was Ta'oto.

Ta'oto was about 17 years old, and comely. Her hair, which was of the black related to blue rather than brown, was thick, and long; her skin, almost the color of bronze, radiated health. Her teeth were perfectly straight, and white. And she smelled good. Many women in French Polynesia smell of fish, and the smoke of cooking; but some, like Ta'oto, scent their bodies lightly with coconut oil, and that's very nice. The only thing that Ta'oto wore beside the coconut oil was a blue sarong with a white print upon it.

"How do you like the wine?" Dr. Benoit was saying.

"Oh . . . very good," Howard replied dishonestly. It tasted like vinegar to him.
"Good," she said, and refilled his glass.  
It was quiet in the limestone house.  
"Drink your wine, Doctor," Dr. Benoit told him.  
"Yes, Doctor," he answered, and drank a bit of wine.  
Another pause.  

Then Dr. Benoit said, "You know, we are alone on this island except for the local people— not one of whom speak either French or English. Under the circumstances it seems silly to call each other Doctor all the time. May I call you Howard?"

"Of course, Doctor," Howard answered.  
She smiled. "You must call me Michelle."  
Howard made no response: he didn't even move.  
"Do I make myself clear?" Dr. Benoit inquired, thinking to herself loudly, What in the hell do I have here: a fool?  

"Yes," Howard said.  
"Yes, what?" Dr. Benoit demanded—gently; for she was exercising remarkable restraint for Dr. Benoit. Apparently this oaf she was talking to had to be treated like a child if she was to make him her lover . . .  

"Yes . . . Michelle: is that right?"

"Yes," she said, and took a big swallow of wine.  
"Tell me something about yourself," she suggested.  
"Oh, I don't know," he said. Clearly he was at a loss.
"Anything," she said, hopefully.

"Oh . . . I wear size 12 B shoe . . . How's that?"

She was dumbfounded—momentarily. My God, she thought. I can't believe this! He must be kidding! "Howard," she exclaimed, "we are going to be living together, or I should say, working together. Surely you have more to say than that!"

He sat there, so uncertainly—poor thing. She was yelling at him. What did she want from him? She was wearing a thin blouse, and not only were the top three buttons unbuttoned, he could tell she wasn't wearing a brassiere underneath. And she was yelling at him!

"Howard, they told me that you were a great speaker. They told me you were fascinating to listen to." Get ahold of yourself, Michelle. You're scaring him! Besides, he just arrived this afternoon. You're moving too fast.

Still, Howard said nothing. But then he took a big gulp of wine.

That's probably good for him, she thought. Be gentle. Draw him out. Let him speak, and look very interested. He'll soon recover his confidence. "Suppose you tell me," she suggested calmly, "what you really think about what we are doing here—or perhaps, your role in it. Be candid. It's all right."

Howard said, pointing to the 'ape, "Uh, may I have
some more of that, please?"

"Of course," she answered, and handed him the bowl of ape. "What do you think, Howard? Do you believe people can communicate in meaningful ways without words?" She seemed so warm now, so interested in his opinion, so capable of understanding . . .

"But why?" Howard blurted out. "Why should people do without the most effective tool of communication man has, hitherto, been able to develop, and, I might add, perfect? Why should we willingly go back to the barely comprehensible, uninteresting days of hundreds of thousands of years ago?"

Ah, she thought. So he is against the idea! And he can talk! "Because, Howard, words, like tools, were meant to be used by men, for men, not against them. And like tools, they were meant to be means, not ends. But increasingly man is coming to mistake words for Reality itself. An appealing slogan may mean more to man that the life of another man. It's come to that."

Howard was coming to life. An argument, a verbal clash was coming down, and he loved them. Suddenly he was in his element.

"First, I would like to say, Doctor," he began, smoothly, even smiling slightly, "that for a person with a professed aversion to words, you use them with considerable skill. So much so that I must suspect you. However, be
that as it may, inasmuch as I relish a good argument, I wel­
come such debate. Your rhetoric does not cover up the empti­
ness of your remarks—please forgive me if I seem to be rude: I am simply entering into this discussion, as, indeed, you requested of me, in order to bring order. If what I say hurts, or throws light on the darker side of your theory, I assure you it is impersonal. Let me begin by asking you to be more specific. I believe you said that an appealing slogan may mean more to a man than the life of another man. You were, I presume, referring to wars?"

They were right, she thought, even with a bit of glee. And not only is he long winded, he's pedantic, and conceited. My God, what have I got here?

"You wanted an example, is that right?"

Howard said, "Yes," and took another large gulp of wine.

"I knew a man who, as a child, was accompanying his father to the store one day, in their town in central Europe. Suddenly, the two of them were surrounded by four men who lived in the same town. They asked the father if he were a Jew. They didn't know, you see, because the man spoke Ger­
man, just as they did: and he looked like any other man on the street in that town. He said, 'Yes, I am a Jew' and so they knocked him down, and kicked him, and two years later they killed him. The reason for this was because the word
Jew, just a few innocent letters, was attached to his name."
She paused. "What do you think of that for an example?"

Howard looked at her. He was already feeling the
effects of the wine, unaccustomed to it as he was. He saw
this very attractive, middle-aged woman across from him,
with beautiful green eyes. He could not help but think of
her as a woman, if only because he was continuously seeing
the outlines of her nipples pressing through her thin blouse.
The wine made him forget everything else in the world except
what he was seeing, and hearing, and feeling. Actually, he
couldn't see, or hear anything except her. And he realized
that she was his boss; his future depended in part on what
would happen on this island. And the story she had just
told: it was about Jews. He was Jewish. He'd never felt
it, especially. He hadn't chosen it. But he was Jewish.

"That's an effective example," he said. "I'm not
sure, however, that that is evidence against words, per se."
He paused. It was not like him to have starch taken out of
his argument so quickly. He knew that, and wondering about
that, however fleeting, made his pause that much longer.
The longer he paused, the more starch he lost. He began
again. "How about this? You wouldn't have science, you
wouldn't have technology, you wouldn't even have culture
without words. Certainly you as a scientist can appreciate
that the value of science is contingent upon its mastery of
all it surveys, ultimately, and success comes through trial
and error, and error is eliminated by experience recorded.
Recorded by words! We'd have no science without words!"
He'd like to see her try and answer that!

Dr. Benoit was smiling slightly, and it disconcerted
Howard because he'd just made an indefensible argument on
behalf of words: didn't she realize that? He had her on
the run. She shouldn't be smiling!

"You know, Howard, I can see you do love words. It's
almost a pity you won't be able to use them." Dr. Benoit
took a long drag off the short cigarette, and allowed the
smoke to come out her nostrils.

"And please, Dr. Benoit; at least when we're talking
like this, don't call me Howard." Howard boldly took another
swallow of wine. He felt the disassociative, mechanical
feeling in his arm, neck and head, that kind of "reckless-
ness" that comes to some who drink too much wine. Hey, he
thought. You're getting drunk! Pay more attention to what's
going on here.

"I am so disappointed," Dr. Benoit declared. "I
asked you to call me Michelle, and you don't. I call you by
your Christian name, and you ask me not to. Why?"

"When you call me Howard . . ." He didn't know how
to finish what he started.

Dr. Benoit leaned forward, and looked very inter-
ested. "Yes?" she said, softly.

"Well . . . it disarms me."

"It disarms you?"

"I don't know . . . That's how it feels." Howard was confused, and wished he was still on the plane flying to Tahiti. Or better still, back in his bed at Yale, thinking about that black haired girl.

"Why should you feel disarmed, Howard?"

"Please don't call me Howard right now, Dr. Benoit, if you don't mind please."

"Why should you feel disarmed, Dr. Feigenbaum? Or why should you be concerned about it? Surely you don't feel that you are in combat with me . . . do you?"

"Look, Dr. Benoit," Howard said, desperately. "About words . . . Do you mind if I stand up, and go out, and get a bit of air. Maybe I drank too much wine."

Smiling, she told him of course she didn't mind; in fact, it was a good idea; if he didn't mind, she'd join him. So they went out into the night.

Nights in Polynesia are indescribable, for there is something in the air, almost palpable, and it has no name. The cool breezes are perfumed by the frangipani, or the tiare flower, or vanilla, or vavae. The air itself is incredibly clear, so that one is touched by millions of twinkling stars, and a moon so intimate with the earth, and the sea, that it
almost seems unnatural. The surf is constantly pounding the beach—only the rhythm and volume change. And on islands such as Rapa there is always laughter.

Almost from the moment he walked out of Dr. Benoit's house, Howard heared Haege mai, haege mai (Come to me, come to me) but because he didn't understand the words, and because he was disoriented, he didn't give them another thought. The Polynesians believe the sea can talk—but of course, that's nonsense.

"Would you like to take a walk?" Dr. Benoit asked him.

"I think I'll go down to the ocean. I've never seen the sea, you see, before today."

"I've never seen the sea, you see . . . That's very nice, Howard. May I call you Howard now?"

"Okay," he said.

"May I come with you to see the sea?" she asked.

". . . okay."

They began walking. They didn't talk, but walking through the coral sand sounded like huskys barking as they pulled a sled, or solves giving voice as they closed in on an exhausted elk. And of course, there was the booming of the surf.

"Are you cold?" she asked.

"No," he said.

They continued walking through the starry night,
the huskys barking around their feet, and the surf continuing
to pound.

"I'm afraid," he said, sadly, "that you and the
wine made me indiscreet back there, and far more candid than
was necessary--about how I value words, and where they fit
into the scheme of things . . . you know . . . ."

"Nonsense," she told him. "I see that you are a
passionate man--at least about some things--and I like passion
in a man. Without it, there is no life."

Howard nodded, and they walked some more in silence,
or more accurately, to and with the accompaniment of the
pounding surf, and the sound of dogs barking in the distance.

"I don't like yes-men, anyhow," she continued. "I
am not worried about the way you feel. I think we'll get
along fine, but I must have your cooperation, if not your
complete allegiance in this project."

"Of course," Howard said, like an adult. They were
thirty to forty yards from the shore now, and walking parallel
to it.

"Beginning tomorrow, you will be on a two or three
week vacation in French Polynesia. You'll have no obliga-
tions, no duties. You may do anything you wish, except
learn the language here, and you must not try to teach any-
one your own. That's the only condition. Rather a nice
assignment, don't you think so?"
"It's virtually unbelievable," Howard replied.

"You know," Dr. Benoit said suddenly, and with enthusiasm, as if she'd just had an idea. "I have an idea. Here in Polynesia, one of the pastimes that people seem to enjoy very much is skinny dipping."

"Skinny dipping?" Howard asked hesitantly.

"Yes . . .?"

"I don't know the expression, I'm afraid."

She looked up at him, smiling, and shook her head. It's American slang, you see," she said, "but perhaps they don't use this expression in your part of the country. It means swimming without anything on. You know? Naked."

"Oh," he said. "I see."

"One usually does it in the night," she told him, "though not necessarily. It's great fun. You should try it if you never have. One experiences, I think, a real exhilaration shedding bourgeois restraints."

"I'm sure," he said. "Uh, isn't it a bit cool out?"

"The water is really quite warm. Would you like to take a swim? I have long since outgrown foolish modesty, but if you like you may keep your clothes on."

"I don't know . . ." he said doubtfully. Actually, there was no doubt in his mind. He wasn't going to do that! The question was, how was he going to get out of it?

"Come on; you'll enjoy it." So saying, she ran down
to the water's edge, and began taking off her blouse. And when she did that she removed her pants, and she had nothing on under them; standing there, shocked, under the great starry sky of a night in the south Pacific, Howard Donald Feigenbaum, Ph.D., nearly swooned.

She ran like a child to the sea. She didn't look back. Had she done so, she might have been able to see that the cuffs of Howard's trousers were a couple of inches higher off the ground than usual, and she might have been able to see the reason why. A lesson was being brought home to Howard; namely, that the body has a mind and will all its own.

He stood there on the beach, virtually transfixed, looking out to sea as Dr. Benoit, before his very eyes, cavorted like a child, riding the waves, stark-naked! Madness! It was incredible! Was this Dr. Benoit, or some mad imposter? The whole thing, actually, had been pretty strange . . . His professors had worn tweed; the men usually smoked a pipe, and the few women he'd come in contact with were appropriately serious . . . Who was this woman? . . .

Now he was about to begin the culmination of his education, with post-doctoral research, and begin his professional life, he was stuck on an island with a woman who very possibly was very intelligent, but certainly mad as a hatter, with whom he must work, and maintain good relations.
And on the entire island there was no one else to whom he could talk. How was he going to handle that?

_She certainly has a lot of hair down there, _he thought.

She kept gamboling in the surf. Once she beckoned with her arm for him to join her, but he wasn't going to join her!

_Mother should see me now, _he thought. _Well, I've stood here and waited like a perfect gentleman. I didn't turn away. I'm doing okay. I've just got to act cool, and warm and friendly, and blase. That's all. That's all I've got to do. Everything will work out. Maybe._

Finally she came out. She put on her clothes, and ran up to him, smiling—considerably—and panting from her exertion. She grabbed him by the arm, and started to walk back to the clearing. Her dripping hair was in ringlets, and beads of water reflected moonlight on her trembling skin. The cloth of her blouse, now very damp, clung in patches to her breasts and erect nipples.

"Hi," she said easily to Howard, who seemed to be having a slight problem breathing. "Did you enjoy my swim?" He realized with a start, that she was teasing him. And she was swinging her hips more, too. _This is amazing! _And then Howard realized, and was made more amazed by the realization, that he felt, among other things, almost happy because she
seemed so happy! When he'd first met her she seemed so stern, and imposing; even cross. But now she seemed much nicer. Nicer, but less normal, he reminded himself. He didn't know how to answer her teasing, so what else could he do but keep quiet. It was enough that they were walking up the beach arm in arm. After all, he knew he was just Howard Feigenbaum, and this woman, this woman was old enough to be his mother, and he had just met her, and she was beautiful, and she was his boss . . . !!!

The next morning was weather as usual: bright and warm, sunny and beautiful. Howard was awakened by the sound of laughter, and conversation right outside his hut. At first, he thought he was awakening from a dream, and then it all began coming back to him. He remained on his back on his narrow bed, and tried to organize his thoughts. But he wasn't ready to think—not yet; he had a longstanding habit of going to the bathroom, first thing in the morning, before doing anything else. In other words, effective thinking could and would begin only after he moved his bowels.

He got up, and examined his quarters; he discovered that there was no bathroom. He assumed, then, that there must be an outhouse in back, or one central building where all the plumbing would be revealed.

There was none. He decided he'd just have to use Dr. Benoit's bathroom, for the time being. He went over to
her house—which he realized now, was considerably more substantial than the others—and knocked on the door.

Ta'oto came to the door.

"Dr. Benoit?" Howard asked.

Ta'oto pointed to a path that disappeared into the jungle. Howard figured that Dr. Benoit must have already gone. All right; he would just go in and use her bathroom. He was sure she wouldn't mind; he'd explain it to her in the evening, but saronged Ta'oto stood firmly in the doorway.

"Me . . . ," Howard said, pointing to himself, "bathroom." He pointed inside.

Ta'oto looked imperturbable, and not inclined to move. So Howard gave her a smile, and a humble little bow, and tried to slip by her. But she wouldn't let him. Then, by moving his hands, head and eyebrows, he tried to indicate that it was okay, she should simply let him in. He tried once more to reassure her that it was "okay," and he moved his lips, unconsciously, to tell her it was "okay." And he tried to pass, and could not.

The girl called out something in Polynesian, and a moment later Tioti appeared. Ah, good, thought Howard. He'll understand; he'll let me in. So Howard went through it with Tioti; but Tioti shook his head negatively, and didn't smile any more than Ta'oto had (not).
There was a large palm tree nearby. Howard indicated with his head, that Tioti should join him. Tioti followed. When Howard had his attention, he charaded unzipping his fly, and then urinating, making a hissing sound as he did so to make his message as clear as possible. Then, seeing that he had Tioti's complete attention, he indicated, or tried to indicate that that was what he wanted to do in Dr. Benoit's house (actually, of course, he wanted to do more than that, but even a charade has to end somewhere). Tioti looked at Howard as if Howard was mad. He pointed to the jungle only 20 or 25 yards away. Howard nodded impatiently. "Yes, but . . . ," he protested, and then stopped.

"I can't go in?" he asked slowly, pointing to the house. "Toilet," he said. "Bathroom."

Tioti shook his head disapprovingly. He pointed to the jungle again, and then he pointed to the ocean.

What's the matter with these people? Howard thought angrily. I've got to go, and they're playing games . . . "What am I supposed to do in the ocean?" he demanded of Tioti, angrily—even though he knew that Tioti couldn't understand him—and even though he knew the answer. It was obvious.

Well, which one will it be? It's either the ocean, or the jungle . . . Which one? . . . They are both all right insofar as ecology is concerned . . . The jungle will, unquestionably, provide more privacy, but I'm not at all certain
about security . . . bugs, animals, snakes . . . Maybe I can find a place in the ocean a few miles away from here that'll afford me some privacy . . . Will you please make up your mind? I've got to go! . . .

So he went down to Te Moana Nui Kiva, the great Pacific Ocean. This was a good decision: Polynesians who live close to the ocean use it for the same purpose he was going to use it. The greenhorn, Howard, got part of his trousers wet in the ocean, and he experienced considerably anxiety fearing he might be seen (even though he'd gone at least a mile from the camp). The important thing was, however, that he had gone into the ocean a complete gringo (as it were), and emerged, as from a baptism, feeling healthier, and happier. The new learning had begun.

He went back to fare iti, and changed into his Bermuda shorts (plaid), a tee-shirt, and sandals. He put on some Coppertone, and since there were no chairs in his shack, he sat down on an oil drum to think. He thought about where he was at, why things were as they were, and what he was going to do. But before long he was hungry, so he went out into the bright sunlight again, in the dark.

He had heard that on an island in the south Pacific, one simply picked bananas, or papayas, or mangoes off a tree. He walked into the clearing, which was the center of the compound, and looked around. He saw a woman attending to the
plaits of her young daughter's hair; he saw a man dressed in
denim shorts and a torn undershirt carrying a five gallon
kerosene can (filled with drinking water); he saw a young
teenager, a male, leading a horse; he saw a little boy sitting
naked in front of a shack, aggravating the scrawny family dog;
he saw a woman scrubbing clothes on a washboard in a tub;
he saw two men, middle aged, thick set, dressed only in the
Polynesian sarong, and sandals—when they saw him, they waved
a greeting (Howard tried to smile, and gave them an indis-
tinguished wave, and semi-bow back); he saw another woman
pulling mangoes off a tree behind her house. So he set out
towards the woman.

Assuming (correctly) that the Hawaiian language was
closer to Tahitian than was English, Howard greeted the woman
with a cheery "Aloha" when he got close enough. The woman
turned, and seeing that it was herself that he'd addressed,
smiled hesitantly—but her smile changed when he came too
close. He began making some kind of signs. She didn't under-
stand. Then he began walking slowly towards her tree; and
when he arrived at it, and turned and smiled at her, she
didn't know what to make of him. She knew he was the new
nono (white man), but she had no idea of what he wanted, and
besides, she couldn't talk to him (even if she could): on
Rapa, married women do not speak to other men. This young
nono began rubbing his belly, smiling, and pointing to his
mouth. Still smiling, he reached up, and pulled a mango off a branch. She didn't like it—since it was her tree, on her property, and he hadn't even asked her if he could take one—but when he reached for another one, she shrieked: Hio fenua tua araposal! (Get the hell off my property!)

He didn't know what she had cried out, but he knew it wasn't friendly. For a moment he stood there, surprised, and hurt; then he tried gesturing, explaining how it was... but then, seeing a man coming towards them with what appeared to be purpose, he bowed hurriedly, and departed—with a mango in his hand (which turned out to be his breakfast).

He retreated to fare iti, and sat down on the oil drum to think, again. Mind you, this young American seated on an oil drum in a little grass shack on a very remote island in the south seas, was Howard Feigenbaum, of Bloomington, Indiana, Ph.D., Doctor of Cerebral Physiology in Anthropology. Yea, he nearly wept when he remembered America, and his impressive education in the east.

I must not lose my head, he said. But how shall I get along without words, without a proper assignment, without a bathroom, without a lot of things, having only a moral who-knows-what for a mentor!? This is terrible, he said. I must not lose my head.

A hungry Howard explored the area immediately around
the camp for several hours. And he also began his sun tan.
Despite his general frustration and anger, Howard rather
liked what he saw. Except for the beach, which was of fine,
white sand, green things grew everywhere, and the air was
heavy with the tropics. Strange colorful little birds flew
about the tops of the palm trees.

When Howard returned to his hut later that afternoon
there was a note waiting for him. It said, "Come over for
coffee--Michelle."

So he went over for coffee. She appeared, smiling,
a moment after he'd knocked on the door. She was wearing
shorts, and a beautiful blue silk blouse.

She greeted him by saying, "Hi, Howard," as she let
him in. "Come on in."

"Hi," he said. Despite himself, for his mood might
be described as dark grey, he liked her smile, and the way
she looked, and the way she had of pronouncing words begin­
ning with the letter H.

"Please sit down," she told him. "I'll be back in
a moment." Moments later she was back, and sitting down
opposite him, said, "We'll have coffee very soon, and banana
fritters. How does that sound to you?"

"I must say," he replied, "it sounds very good to
me."

"Oh? . . . Are you hungry? Didn't you eat today?"
He thought, she knows; but he said, "No, I ate. I had a mango for breakfast." He tried to say it lightly, but he knew he hadn't succeeded.

"I see . . . ," she said. "And lunch?"

"Circumstances being what they were, Doctor, it seemed to me an unusually ideal opportunity to witness the dynamics of fasting." Howard sounded slightly more like his old self.

"Michelle," Dr. Benoit said.

"What?"

"I'd prefer for you to call me Michelle, Howard--not Doctor . . . All right?"

"Yes," he said. " . . . Anyhow, as I was saying, I may find myself doing an extensive bit of fasting here on Rapa. Perhaps I'll even take advantage of the opportunity to investigate the dynamics of starvation on an intellectual on an island in the south Pacific." He smiled thinly. "After all," he added, "I could actually study the effects subjectively." Howard, who had used sarcasm only rarely in his life, was pleased with the nuance he thought he'd put into his statement.

Michelle, however, regarded him evently, apparently unruffled, and considered who the speaker was, and the cause and effect of the temper tantrum. He had reminded her of her nephew, Gerard, and she knew how to handle Gerard. So.
Then, in an attractive, intelligent, and pleasant voice she asked Howard what he'd done during the day.

"What did I do? . . ." He paused, and then, "I began my day," he said, "by being turned away from your house by your servants. I tried to explain to them that I wished only to use your bathroom, but either they didn't understand me, or they were afraid I'd abscond with the faucets from your sink. Anyhow, to be frank—and I might add that I think circumstances on this island will conspire to promote frankness—as I was saying, to be frank, my intestinal system is such that I require . . ." He paused for a briefest moment, "a bathroom. I'm sure you can appreciate that. This morning I took a constitutional along the shores of the great Pacific, and elected—indeed, I was obliged—to defecate therein—which I did—having little choice."

"Very good, Howard," Dr. Benoit declared heartily. "Go on."

He paused, reflecting on the gusto with which she had just responded. Then, picking up the thread of his speech once again, very nicely, he continued. "There being no restaurants available in the neighborhood—that is, as far as I know—and my larder, completely non-existent, I decided to avail myself to what nature could provide. In other words, I decided to pick my breakfast off a tree—as I had been told that this was the accepted manner of procuring nourishment on
a south sea island. Apparently someone owned the tree, however, and I was obliged to beat a hasty retreat. But not before I stole one mango for my breakfast this morning."

Dr. Benoit exhaled two nostrils of smoke. "Did you learn something about your experiences today?"

"Yes," he admitted. I hope I don't have to tell her what.

"Good," she said. "I won't ask you what." She sipped her coffee, and Howard followed suit. "Do you like the coffee?" she asked.

"Yes," he said, but he didn't. The only way he drank coffee, and he rarely drank coffee, was with cream and sugar. Why don't I ask her for cream and sugar, he thought.

"It's grown right here on Rapa. Isn't that interesting?"

"Oh, yes," he answered.

A silence followed. Howard made the most of it, though, by eating his lunch (as it were); he ate almost all of the banana fritters leaving, however, the last one on the plate.

"Good?" she asked him.

Somehow not embarrassed, he answered, "Indubitable."

She smiled inscrutably, exhaling in the French manner, sitting up erectly. She looked—even to Howard, who was only vaguely aware of how he felt—very attractive (she was wearing a blouse made of blue silk, given to her by one of her lovers),
very intelligent (in large part, one sensed her intelligence by virtue of her uncommonly deep set, large, luminous, and lively green eyes), and very pleasant (a look she had cultivated).

"All right," Dr. Benoit allowed. "There are bugs in the stew, of course. I understand. But you will remove them."

"What?" Howard asked.

"There are flies in the stew. So they will be removed. Right?"

"Right," Howard said.

"What did you do about your hunger? I assume you were still hungry after one mango."

"Right," Howard said again. He was seated perhaps three or four feet away from Dr. Benoit, directly across from her, so he couldn't help but see her, and see her, and see her. He liked her blouse very much: silk has a way of beguiling intellectuals. He thought he could tell, even though the blouse was cut loosely, that she wasn't wearing a brassiere. He liked the way she looked. He was realizing too, more or less, how expressive her eyes were... But she had asked him a question, and for Howard, a question was a serve which had to be returned: it was part of the game. And so he recalled himself, and recalling the question, answered, "I remained hungry."
Smiling her little smile, she shook her head, and muttered "Quel domage!" softly to herself. "If you like," she told him, "you may dine with me this evening. I will see to it that there is enough for a hungry young scientist to eat."

"Thank you," Howard said neutrally. He had not made up his mind as yet where he stood, how to feel, etc., and to say "Thank you," enthusiastically, might be all wrong, considering the facts of the situation, and might mark him as a fool--on the other hand, maybe he should have said it enthusiastically . . . he wasn't really sure what was going on.

The tension lessened, and after a while, Howard retired to his little grass shack, where he would take a nap--in preparation for dinner that evening at Dr. Benoit's at 8:00.

Dinner, with its mixed blessings, appeared as if it were going to be the social event of the day, every day, on the island of Rapa--for Howard, that is. However uncertain he felt about his relationship with Dr. Benoit, Howard looked forward to dinner because there he could eat, and even more important, there he could speak--and be understood, and be spoken to. Already he could see that he was going to be starved for conversation on the island. He told himself he'd have to be tactful, and stay on the good side of Dr. Benoit, or else he might wind up talking to himself.

* * * *
The dinner that evening was tasty, and the social side of it was brief. Dr. Benoit said she had some notes she wanted to go over. But the conversation that they did have was quite without tension. It was rather matter-of-fact, and to the point. Dr. Benoit told Howard where, for a few francs, he could make simple purchases like, fishing line, etc., and she thought he could possibly buy some food there as well. So after dessert (candied ginger and breadfruit), Howard said good-night, and walked along the beach—finally retiring at ten.

* * * * *

The next morning, Howard hurried down to the sea where, having carefully thought the matter out beforehand, he eliminated most efficiently. This activity completed, he returned to the shore, donned his Bermuda shorts, and trudged back to camp feeling agreeable.

He made his way directly to the hut Dr. Benoit had pointed out to him the previous night, and with relative ease was able to purchase a couple of papayas, a mango, some fishing line, and a hook.

Emboldened by his new found mastery of the environment, Howard determined, while eating his second papaya, that he would follow the trail Dr. Benoit took earlier in the morning, and see where it led.

Therefore, a short time later, while his stomach was
digesting his breakfast of tropical fruits, his legs were taking him down the jungle path, somewhere on the island of Rapa. His mind, meanwhile, was busy reviewing last night's conversation with Dr. Benoit; and at the same time, it was fixed on the memory of her firm, unbound breasts, moving freely under the blue silk blouse she was wearing.

You're supposed to be a scientist! he berated himself. He walked on. All right, it's true, he told himself. While breasts are essentially sweat glands, secondary sex characteristics of the female mammal, they are also Nature's contrivance for soliciting the attention of the human male to the female—being designed in such a way as to cause the male to want to touch those breasts, which in turn, seems to drive him on to initiate sexual intercourse—which is, of course necessary for the perpetuation of the species... In other words, How, Nature wants you to touch breasts, that's why it tempts you...

Howard's thought process was interrupted by the harsh squacking of a beautiful Bird of Paradise which flew directly across his line of vision, perhaps only twenty feet ahead of him. These birds have the most spectacular plumage in the world, and have long flowing tail feathers, seemingly colored by incredibly rich dyes. The Polynesians believe them to be omens of good fortune. Now up until this point, Howard had been so preoccupied with Dr. Benoit, that he had been
virtually blind to the lush vegetation in the jungle; the huge tree-ferns, quava bushes, hibiscus plants, orange and candlenut trees that were all around him. Even a man with partial vision in one eye would surely be awakened, as it were, if a Bird of Paradise flew across his path. Thereafter, Howard, who may have been slightly near sighted, but not blind, began paying attention to the sights and the sounds of the jungle.

A short time later, Howard realized that he was hearing the sound of running water off to his left. He turned off the path to follow the sound, and as he got closer to it, he began hearing human voices, calling, shouting and laughing. And then, suddenly, all was revealed: he could see a small waterfall, and young ladies swimming and playing in the pond, and under the waterfall. There didn't appear to be any males. He stopped dead, motionless and quiet as the oil drum in face iti. The girls were naked.

There were five of them. Their average age was about seventeen. They all had beautiful thick blue black hair which, being wet, hung down below their shoulders, and shone mightily in the sunlight. All had the dark golden smooth skin of the Polynesian people, and their teeth, and the whites of their eyes were very white in the sunlight. They were chattering, and splashing one another, and laughing.

Howard watched, fascinated. He had crouched down in
order not to be seen. **I'm a scientist here to gather information about these people,** he told himself. **I'm supposed to watch them, especially when they're not aware they are being observed!** Not only was his heart pounding, his inner laugh was nervous. **My God!** he thought. They were coming out now, and he could see all of them. **Wow... I'd better get out of here!**

When he got back to the trail he was still excited, and happy. **I've got to learn. This is going to be my education. You've got to grow up, Howard. Just be cool. You're okay. Just be cool. This is your education...**

He followed the path which ended suddenly at the clearing and there was the village. Howard stopped, and decided to move into the bushes on his right, the better to watch, undetected, the villagers. There were, perhaps, thirty or forty shacks in the clearing, and perhaps twenty or thirty people. Of these, most were women—and of these, all wore the pareu (the authentic Polynesian sarong) fastened at the waist, just like the men. In other words, all the women were bare breasted. Bare in mind as well, the average Polynesian woman is generally somewhere between stocky and fat. However, now and again there is a young Polynesian girl who, even by Western standards, is beautiful. Sitting not more than forty yards away from where Howard was crouched in the bushes, weaving a floor matting, was one of these girls. Her name was Turia.
Howard watched life in the village in general, and Turia in particular, for nearly two hours. The bugs bothered him somewhat, and he became uncomfortable—but he stayed on. Two girls about Turia's age appeared, along with a very young boy, and Turia got up, calling to another young boy (probably her brother), and all of them left the clearing, taking the trail, passing no more than ten yards away from Howard. They were all quite gay, talking animatedly.

Very cautiously, very carefully, Howard followed them. They soon veered off on another path which led, Howard soon discovered, to the swimming hole. They were going swimming.

Howard watched the young Polynesians play around in the water, under the waterfall, shouting, swimming a little, and since a bar of soap appeared, bathing. All of them were completely naked. At first, Howard felt he couldn't catch his breath as he watched the lovely Turia leaping out of the water, or running a few steps in a shallow shaol. To say that he was sexually excited would be a considerable understatement. You miserable voyeur, he told himself as he watched them. Finally they left and he left, returning to fare iti.

Howard spent the afternoon recovering, sitting under a bright blue sky on top of an outcropping of rock, about ten feet above the Pacific, fishing. (That is to say, when the
tide was in, he was ten feet above the Pacific; when the tide
was out, however, immediately below was jagged coral, and rock--
the rock contained pockets of trapped ocean teeming with small
to miniscule oceanic life.) Here there was no perfume in the
air--just the smell of salt water. And as far as the eye
could see, there was nothing except sea, and sky.

As if Howard didn't have enough adventure for one day
that morning, he had experienced further excitement that after­
noon. He'd had to catch his bait (because that's how it is
in the islands) and so he had been forced to be a hunter be­
fore he could be a fisherman. He was successful in this ven­
ture, catching and killing a small crab (a young female,
not yet grown); he broke it (her) open, extracted the meat,
and was now prepared to fish.

Unfortunately, he was a better hunter than a fisher­
man. It is not easy, unless one is experienced to catch and
land a fish, while fishing in the ocean's swell--and of course,
there's the problem of getting the line out there far enough
to have the larger fish discover the free lunch (which, how­
ever, has a string attached to it). So at about four o'clock,
Howard retired from his day's fishing activity, empty handed,
and made his way back to his little grass shack, fare iti.

Dinner was on at Dr. Benoit's. The dinner consisted
of taro, breadfruit, and wild goat (the latter prepared in a
rich coconut sauce, with berries). The light was provided by
two candles on the table (and an oil lamp surreptitiously off to the side). Dr. Benoit had revealed a short wave radio, and French music was playing softly in the background. The customary bottle of wine was on the table. Indeed, the bottle of wine had started Howard thinking. If there was a new bottle of wine on Dr. Benoit's table, say, every other evening, how many bottles of wine did she bring with her to Rapa? and where did she keep them all? Howard was wondering about the wine, when Dr. Benoit broke a five minute silence. It had been their first real silence.

"Well, Howard," she began, "how was your day today?"
"Fine," he replied, "thank you."
"No trouble getting what you wanted?"
"No trouble at all. It seems my Uncle Bill was right, after all."
"Oh? What was your Uncle Bill right about?"
"Well... Not infrequently Uncle Bill used to come over to our house when I was a child," Howard told her, "and I can recall, vividly, him saying--usually during dinner--'Money talks--and don't you forget it!'. He would say this to my father and mother; privately, in my great juvenile wisdom, I was judging Uncle Bill, whom I judged to be only another common, uneducated, raving materialist. But today I learned that my Uncle Bill may have been right after all."

Dr. Benoit smiled. "I see," she said. "Would you
like some more wine?"

"Okay," Howard replied, "but not too much."

Pouring the wine, Dr. Benoit asked Howard if he bought what was necessary for fishing, as he'd indicated last night he wanted to do. He said he did. She asked him if he was successful. He said, No, but that he had done a good bit of thinking while up on the rock, and she said, Good, there was a lot he should think about—he had seven months in front of him on an island in the south seas, with practically nothing to do, but have a good time, and learn something—if he could.

During this conversation, Dr. Benoit lit up another Galois, and smoked it in her fashion, as Howard watched, very interested. And they both drank a little more wine.

After another lull in the conversation, Dr. Benoit asked Howard how he liked the music.

"Fine," he said.

"Do you dance?" she asked him.

He said, "No,"—but apparently he didn't feel that that answer was sufficient, because he added, "To me, it has always seemed that dancing is simply a social contrivance in order to facilitate a man and a woman touching—in a socially approved manner, of course. Undoubtedly it serves a function—especially in your more primitive societies—but I don't need it, therefore, why should I dance?"
Dr. Benoit stood up. "Come," she offered, holding out her hand. "I will show you how to dance."

Howard remained seated. "But why?" he protested. "I've just told you, I have no desire to dance. I'm a civilized person."

"Come and do as I tell you. Perhaps you'll have the good fortune to discover that you are not so civilized as you think you are." She turned the radio louder, and then she turned back to Howard, and repeated her invitation. "Come on, Howard."

Howard remained seated, staring up at his colleague, and mentor, unhappily. Why was she doing this to him, he wondered. What had he done to her? Here she was, old enough to be his mother . . .

She smiled at him. "Are you going to let me be alone on this dance floor?" she asked him and held out her arms.

What could he do? He got up. "Now you understand," he said, obviously trying to make it very clear, "that I am not a dancer, and that, indeed, I don't even know how to dance."

"How do you know?" Dr. Benoit asked him, as she took his arms and put them in the right places.

"Because I've never done it before," he said crossly.

"Well then, how do you know?" she repeated brightly. She was smiling, making it difficult for him to sulk. "Come
on, now," she said, and began their dance.

Any hope that Howard may have had that he wouldn't have to hold her close promptly vanished. In fact, he had to hold her so close that he couldn't help but feel her breasts against his chest. Unable to do otherwise, he was obliged to feel, and think about what he was feeling, which alerted his manhood, which immediately showed interest, which, in turn, alerted Dr. Benoit as to what was happening to Dr. Feigenbaum (in the psychophysical sense).

Dr. Benoit, one of the most advanced students of body language, and non-verbal communication, in the world, smiled. She was tempted to point it out to Howard, to make him aware that they were not communicating in no uncertain terms—without words. What is more, she wanted to let him know, there was no question but that he was communicating truthfully, without the obfuscation that sometimes occurs due to voluntary, or involuntary, camouflage by vocabulary; and other times occurs by indirection on the part of the speaker. She wanted to point these things out to him, but Dr. Benoit was French, she was a woman, and she was a wise one at that. And because she knew what she wanted, and generally, how to get it, she said nothing, but continued dancing closely, but not too closely; intimately, but not too intimately.

Howard, who was supposed to be leading, was following—but following was fine, because after all, he was learning.
The song ended, and the dancers took a wine break. But she did not sit down, and so he didn't, either. Then the music began again, and they danced again. This time Howard did a little better. At first he was embarrassed about his boner, but because he knew that she knew, and didn't say a word, he decided to keep quiet about it himself. Maybe, he told himself, it is not an uncommon thing among adults dancing. After all, he had just told himself that very day that it was time that he grew up, and learned the facts of life.

After they finished that dance, Dr. Benoit took some more wine. They were still both standing near the radio, on the hardwood floor. It was dark out, and apparently they were alone in the house.

Looking up at Howard's handsome face, now unmistakably expressing uncertainty, Michelle said, "Why were you kidding me? You are a good dancer."

Howard smiled stupidly. "No, I'm not," he said—but he wondered if it was possible she couldn't tell—or if, possibly, somehow, he was.

"Come on, cherie," she said softly, still smiling. "Why are you so shy? Why do you say you can't dance?"

Howard shook his head. He was going to protest, but the music began again, and Michelle said, "Ah, that is one of my favorite songs," and she took him, and put his arms around her, and once more they were dancing, closely.
Howard, made bold by the wine, decided he was going to feel her back, and so, firmly, and carefully, he felt her back. And then he felt her hand on the back of his neck. It was put there lightly but, he knew, unmistakably. That is to say, he knew she knew what she was doing.

They were dancing slowly, together, but not especially to the music.

Then the music was over, and she was saying, "Oh, I liked that. Did you?" and he, smiling that stupid grin he was smiling more and more now, replied, "Yes." He was a bit drunk now, but not so much so that he didn't realize, with a little drunken surprise of recognition, that he meant it--at least, he meant it slightly more than he didn't mean it.

"Come on," she said, taking him by the hand. "It's such a beautiful night. Let's go down to the sea."

Howard allowed himself to be taken down to the sea. The two of them walked arm in arm, accompanied, as they always were on the beach, by the sound of sled dogs yelping, and barking in the distance. They walked under a great deep, dark heaven full of stars, and a bright moon, three quarters full. The surf was coming in strong tonight, booming on the beach. Something to the right caught Howard's eye, and suddenly he realized he was seeing a man chasing a woman, about sixty or seventy yards away, up near where the jungle met the beach.

"Look!" he exclaimed.
"Ah, yes," Dr. Benoit sighed. "I love nights in Polynesia, and you will, too."

"But, wait," Howard protested. "I don't think you know what I'm talking about. I just saw a man chasing a woman!" He looked back to where he'd last seen the running figures, and they were gone. "They've disappeared!" he said.

Dr. Benoit had continued walking easily; her arm being linked with Howard's, he too had continued walking, if not altogether easily.

"Don't you care?" he demanded.

"I assure you, cherie, that that was nothing for you to worry about. They are young, you see . . ."

He didn't see—but she should know, he reasoned, and she wasn't upset . . .

They continued walking until they got down to the hard packed sand, about twenty yards from where the surf was crashing in.

"Come on, big boy," she suddenly said, "I bet I can beat you in a race!" and with that, she wheeled, and was running down the beach, with Big Boy standing there, wondering if he should give chase, she quickly realized that he wasn't running, and she came back. "What is it?" she challenged him. "Are you afraid I can beat you?"

"Don't be childish, Michelle," he told her, feeling
that things would start coming around now: he was actually more serious and responsible than she was, and he'd just have to be firm. Make her see that. Get this thing more on a professional basis.

His words did have an effect on her—but not the one he had intended. After a pause, in a disappointed, and serious tone of voice, she said, "Howard. Listen to me. I know something, and I tell you, _cherie_, as gently as I know how: right now, it is you who is the foolish one. There is a time for everything. This is a good time to be foolish. This is a good time to be young. Use your head, Howard; but—now listen to me—use it as if it were empty, as if you knew nothing, but were about to receive your education . . . You are on an island, Howard, very far away from where you were raised. You are on an island in the south seas . . . Do you understand?"

Howard was too angry to understand (because she had turned the tables on him, and was lecturing him!), but not too angry to be perplexed (because dimly he realized that she was saying something he ought to understand!). Damn it all! She asked me if I understood? What shall I tell her? "I don't know, Michelle," he said dully—for he was uncertain. "But . . ."

She interrupted him. "Let's go up and sit on the soft sand, and look at the stars. All right?"
beach, she said, "Do you realize that the stars appear in a
different position here than in America?"

"I hadn't thought about it," he said.

"Because we are in the Southern Hemisphere."

"Of course."

"Here," she said. "Shall we sit down?"

"Okay," he said obligingly, but without much enthu­
siasm.

They sat down, and Dr. Benoit leaned back on her
elbows. The sand was fine, soft, and white; and cool, and
surprisingly hard. The sky was immense, and black, but spot­
ted by millions of stars and a very bright moon. The surf was
pounding in. The air temperature was about 65, and faintly
scented by the salt from the sea, and the vavea and vanilla
of the island.

Dr. Benoit gazed up at the miracle-of-the-sky-every­
night, and said nothing. Dr. Howard Feigenbaum gazed unsee­
ingly towards the sea, and formulated the message he felt it
was necessary that he deliver to Dr. Benoit.

Michelle, I am afraid it has become necessary to con­
front you, and elucidate my feelings as regards our relation­
ship here on Rapa. You see, I think there must needs be
strictly professional--no more, and no less. I think we should
communicate as two scientists, and leave the dancing, and the
skinny dipping to the natives. I want you to know I like you,
but having just arrived from the mainland, I think it is obvious that I can be and am, more objective about your actions, as they relate to me, than you can, and are. Please understand: I have no desire to hurt your feelings. I am sensitive, you see, and well aware that we'll be working together for some time;—consequently, I wouldn't want to jeopardize our professional relationship because of what I am about to say to you. I know you'll be mature enough to take what I have to say in the proper spirit, for it is nothing unreasonable that I am asking for, and is I hope, and trust, Michelle, you'll understand, because you see, I know I am right.

I think your problem is simply that you are starved for human companionship—among peers, of course, I am afraid that the only sort of sustenance I have to offer you is intellectual. I am sure you can understand my position, and respect it—otherwise, I wouldn't tell you these things. I have only the highest respect for you, and I am eager, you see, to learn how body language, and non-verbal communication are affected by a relatively isolated people of mixed racial origins, with the particular historical and geographic considerations as they bear on the people of Rapa—but that's all, you see. So I would like us to remain friends, but I think—in all seriousness, Michelle, that swimming in the moonlight, and dancing, are inappropriate actions between two scientists. Do you understand?
Howard looked at Dr. Benoit (unconsciously, and un­
wittingly seeking to determine from the expression on her face, 
and her general posture if now was the appropriate time to 
deliver his talk). She lay back, her head resting on her 
hands staring at the stars. Howard was suddenly in no mood 
to deliver his lecture, and in no mood to look at the sky 
either. Instead, he began picking up sand with one hand, and 
letting it run through his fingers to the other.

Perhaps it was the steady, sensual motor activity—
oberving the sand slipping through his fingers—that soothed 
our hero's ruffled mind, and weakened his resolve to inform 
Dr. Benoit of her problem. Perhaps he had become absorbed—
if unconsciously—by the thought that somehow, something else 
was slipping through his fingers like grains of sand, exactly 
like grains of sand . . . Here lies Howard Feigenbaum, with 
no desire to talk, and what was even rarer, a mind just idling 
in neutral.

For ten minutes no words passed between the two of 
them, and then Dr. Benoit stood up, and asked Howard if he'd 
care to walk her back to camp. He said he'd be glad to. So 
arm in arm they started back, walking under a million stars, 
through the cool, barking sand, together.

* * *

Howard spent the next several days doing just what 
the doctor had ordered: virtually nothing. Each day was hot
and sunny, and each day was spent the same way. A walk down the beach, followed by breakfast (one tropical fruit or another--purchased), a walk through the jungle (including about a half hour observing village life from behind his special bush, and perhaps an hour of voyeurism down by the old swimming hole), return to fare iti, and then, fishing for a few hours, followed by coffee at Dr. Benoit's (at which time he usually ate his lunch--since he still hadn't caught any fish), an attempt at a nap, another walk on the beach, sitting around doing nothing in fare iti, and then dinner with Michelle.

As for Michelle Benoit, this lady of considerable experience, charm, intelligence, and will power, was being weakened by the first incursions of an insidious destroyer--a common problem among women who always got their way--but now are aging. She knew that where once she'd been able to dominate without seeming to, to get her way with a confident, saucy attitude; now, when she wanted to get her way, she appeared not so much influential, as imperious--like a frustrated woman in search of control . . .

Everyday she came face to face with the uncompromising honesty of a mirror without tact; everyday she faced the truth. She knew all too well the wrinkles around her eyes, and that her graceful throat had become a neck.

Menopause would come, of course--possibly in the near future--but for the time being, she was defiant: there was no question about her sexual desire. There was only a ques-
tion about her desirability.

Though she told herself that this Howard Fegenbaum was a naïf of the first magnitude, and a rather pompous young fool at that, still, she could not rid her mind of doubt. Michelle believed that to be sufficiently attractive was to be virtually irresistible. And why shouldn't she believe that? Over the years her experiences had taught her that she could get almost anything, or anyone she wanted. And now, here was this . . . school-boy, resisting. Of course she was frustrated, and chagrined.

Along at night, lying awake in her bed, she'd think thoughts like this: God, how can I be so stupid! He's nothing but a callow boy in love with the sound of his voice. I would not even look at him ordinarily, and here I am thinking about him. I must be going mad . . . Imagine! . . . I've never known I was such a slave to sex . . . God, I don't want to masturbate . . . It's a comedy, that's what it is . . . Only I don't think it's very funny . . . If only Braspenyx was here now, or Leffingham, or Walter Cohen, or Itinwa, or Picheeta, or Melonus, or even little Ebu. I'd even be glad to have Stuart with me here right now. Any one of them! Never mind the bad times, or difficulties . . . I wonder if I sent Stuart a cable, would he come . . . To come, ah there's the rub--or, to rub, then to come. To come again and again . . . I'd just like to get some joyful sleep, and peace . . .
Here I am a woman, and here he is, my lover, a virgin—I'm sure of it. I wonder what I ever did to deserve this. How incredibly ironic! Of all the applicants I had to choose him. What ever possessed me? Why did I choose him, of all people? . . . Why? . . . Because he was young, and you liked his face on his application picture . . . What a blunder! The one place where it's virtually impossible to take a native as a lover, I send for help and I get a grandiloquent bumpkin who wouldn't know his ass from a hole in the ground! How do you like that! Destiny mocks me. After months of waiting, and dreaming about some young stud who would make us both happy, someone who would appreciate me, and be happy with me, what do I get? An ingenue! . . . So here I am, still alone in this big brass bed. Mon Dieu! This is ridiculous! I've simply got to seduce Howard Feigenbaum and teach him what it's all about. It's that simple; because I'll be damned if I'm going to go on like this for another seven months. He may be a simpleton, but he's got a cock, and I'll simply have to awaken him. Enlighten him, that's what I'll have to do. Which is only proper: he came here for an education. I've got to have him. I've got to have a man. Next month at this time, he'll be sleeping in my arms. Next month? What am I saying? Next week . . . I must have him soon. I can. I know it . . . Michelle, be careful, be sexy, be charming, and don't push too hard. You must seduce your tall young stupid
assistant, Howard. You must wise him up. It will be your
duty, and your pleasure... I hope.

* * * *

It was as Thursday night—though it might have been a Saturday night, or a Monday night—they were all the same on Rapa. Howard knocked on the door and from within, Michelle answered, "Come in." Howard entered and sat down on his by now favorite chair.

"Hi," he said when Michelle appeared from another room (Howard still had not been in any rooms other than the entrance room and the living and dining room).

"Hi," she responded, lightly. She was wearing the blue silk blouse again, the one that Howard liked, and the shorter, tighter shorts that she sometimes wore, and sandals.

"How was your day today?" Howard asked.

"Just watch me, and listen to the things I say, and see if you can't figure it out," Michelle told him easily, as she sat down on the other chair across from him.

"Okay," Howard said.

Michelle thought, Bravo; he said that in an adult way. Last week a statement like that would have hurt his feelings.
Neither of them said anything for a minute. Then Howard said, "Do you mind if I ask what's for dinner tonight?"

"Not at all," she said. "In fact, we're having something special tonight. Ta'oto is preparing poou pataitai."

"What's that?" Howard asked.

"Howard . . . When will you learn?" Dr. Benoit's tone which was essentially mock disapproval, but included tenderness, was intended to reassure Howard that he need not feel unduly defensive about the remark.

After running the remark, and the tone in which it was asked, through his computer, Howard decided to try to answer accordingly. Carefully, he asked, "What do you mean?"

"I mean, cherie, that a rose would smell as sweet by any other name. If you told a visiting Bulgar, for example, that the English word for rose was bedroom, you might enjoy the joke, but he would be unaffected, you see, and would enjoy the scent of the rose, regardless . . . Do you see?"

Howard ran his hand over his chin. "I'm not sure," he said.

"All right . . . For your mouth to experience poou pataitai, and for your body to make use of it, it is not necessary for you to know what it is; in other words, your brain does not need to know its equivalent in English . . . you will partake of its truth regardless of your inability to
label it . . ."

"mm hmm," Howard said thoughtfully. "You don't mean to tell me, though, that all verbal information and equivalents are useless, do you?"

"No, but I do think that many people, especially in the WUst, especially among the educated, have too great a faith in words—as if by naming something you were in control of it—and put too great a reliance on words. The danger is that experiences are not deeply felt, but rather are experienced that they may be thought about, or talked about, in words, and thus we feed our omnivorous appetite for verbal data. Do you understand? . . . I am saying, finally, that the business of living is living, nor articulating . . ."

Howard found to his dismay that he didn't know what there was to say.

"Wait a minute," Michelle said, standing up. "I'll bring back an interesting example." And she walked out of the room, with Howard's eyes fixed on her living derriere.

It must be the food, or maybe the heat, but I can't even think. She must have executed some sophistry there; I'm certain she couldn't have been correct . . . What was she saying? . . .

Dr. Benoit returned with a bowl of a thick, yellowish paste, which she put down on a small table between Howard and herself. "What do you think that is?" she asked.
"I don't know," he answered.
"You're a scientist," she said challengingly. "See if you can find out."

Howard lifted up the bowl, looked closely at the contents, and then smelled it. He shook his head, clearly not certain of just what it was in the bowl. Then he touched it with his index finger, and then carefully tasted just a bit of it.

After several moments, Dr. Benoit asked him what he thought.

"Well . . . I think it's edible," he said.

Dr. Benoit laughed. "Bravo, bravo, Dr. FXigenbaum."

"Well, let's see . . ." He tested another minute quantity with the tip of his finger. "I'd say . . . Hmm! I don't recognize it. I'll try some more."

He liked it. In fact, he liked it so much that the bowl was half emptied by the time the dinner arrived. She would not tell him what it was. It was taro po'e, a fermented paste the Polynesians love, stronger than beer, and stronger than wine (but not so strong as whiskey). Consequently, when the dinner finally arrived, Howard was in excellent spirits.

"Ah," Howard exclaimed as the main course, the poou pataitai, was placed before him by the winsome Ta'oto. "Thank you, Ta'oto," he said to her, and she smiled at him, and exited.
"So this is it, huh?" he stated enthusiastically.

Across from him, Dr. Benoit was smiling. "Would you open the wine, Howard?" she said.

"Sure," he replied and took the bottle by the neck.

"I recognize that food stuff," he told her, indicated the ade. "I seem to recall I loved it." He struggled with the wine bottle a moment more, and then, "There!" and he poured Michele a glass, and one for himself. "I am decidedly looking forward to that whatever it is, Michelle. The olfactory of the thing arrests my nose, demanding satisfaction!"

Michelle laughed, and Howard smiled, pleased with his extravagant poetry, aware that somehow he seemed to be a bit drunk, but of the damn-the-torpedos state of mind. "All right, here I go," he chuckled dramatically, obviously at the brink of beginning the poou pataitai—but then he noticed the large leaf placed on the table to his right. "What's this?" he demanded.

"It's a leaf," Dr. Benoit explained innocently.

"I know it's a leaf, but what's it doing on the table?"

"In the event that the poou pataitai contains bones, or seeds, you may put them there, on the leaf," she said.

He paused, and then he said, "All right." He rubbed his hands together, the stock gesture in old films of a man about to begin a feast. "What's this?" he asked suddenly, referring to the three bananas on his plate.
Dr. Benoit said quietly, "Those are bananas, Howard."

"I know they're bananas," Howard said. "What are they doing there? No, wait. Don't answer that. Are they to be eaten with the whatever it is I'm about to eat?"

"If you'd like to," she suggested.

Howard dipped several fingers in the interesting yellow paste, and hurriedly put it in his mouth--hurriedly--lest the paste fall on the table. "I'm getting to be extremely fond of this unusual tasting whatever it is," he said. Now for the piece de resistance . . . ," and in approved Polynesian fashion, using the fingers, he took some of the poou pataitai, and tasted it.

He said it certainly was unusual, and tasted some more. Then he had a banana, then he took some more of the po'e, then the 'ade, and then he tried the poou pataitai again. He tried to describe the taste to Michelle, but she told him not to talk about the taste, but to really taste only to himself. The poou pataitai is a very large fish which is prepared in coconut juice, mashed sweet potatoes, and salt water, and its taste is virtually indescribable. Howard would take some of the poou pataitai, and then he'd take a bite of banana, and then some po'e, and then some of the 'ade.

"How are you doing, Howard?" Michelle smiled.

"I am really . . . it is really . . ." He paused, and then he said, "You know, Michelle, I have always prided myself
in being able to say exactly what I mean, but I confess, at this moment, I feel the need for slang--and I've never used it . . . What do you make of that?"

"I think it may be a step in the right direction," she said.

"What do you mean by that?" he inquired, and poured himself some more wine.

"Never mind," she said. "Would you please?" she said, indicating her empty wine glass.

"With pleasure," he said. Filling her glass, he thought, *Wow, this wine is really affecting me tonight. I'm loud, reckless and reeling . . .* But he did nothing about it; indeed, he continued drinking the wine (and finished the po' e) for a half hour after Ta'oto came in and took away the food. There was little conversation. Howard was grinning stupidly, woodenly.

Then suddenly he came to life, saying, "All right. Tonight's the night, Doctor."

Michelle said, "What?"

And Howard repeated, "Tonight's the night. I'm going to show you something. You think I am a stick-in-the-mud, don't you?"

In an uncertain voice, Michelle asked, "Whatever are you talking about, Howard?" She had had some of the po' e, and she had been drinking the wine, and she was by no means
unaffected. At this moment, clearly she was having trouble grasping what Howard had just said.

"I am not a stick-in-the-mud," Howard announced righteously. "I'll race you. I remember you wanted to race me. So be it. Come on outside, Doctor. I'll race you."

Now Michelle was laughing.

"Don't laugh," he said. "I admit I feel childish—but I need some air, anyway. Come on. You wanted to race . . ."

"Okay, okay," Michelle conceded. "But can you wait ten minutes before running?"

"I might consider it," Howard said. "Yes, I have considered it; and I will wait for ten minutes to elapse, before we commence to race." Then immediately following that statement, he made this statement, but in a different tone of voice. "I feel my words are falling into some kind of poetic cadence. I wonder if it could be iambic pentameter. Do you hear it, Michelle?"

Michelle laughed.

"Listen, inasmuch as I am without a doubt inebriated," Howard declared, "I would like to take advantage of my besotted super-ego to make, what is for me, an interesting statement . . ." He paused.

Michelle waited a moment, and then broke into the pause. "Yes, Howard?" she prompted.
"Well," he said, obviously not certain now whether he should go on with what he was about to say. "Why not? . . . I think . . . Well, I think you are certainly looking good tonight."

Whereupon Michelle paused, and then broke into laughter.

Which action seemed to surprise Howard, who, after an uncertain moment, broke into her laughter by saying, "What I mean is, when I first saw you, I thought you were an anthropologist who happened to be a woman, and looking at you tonight, especially, I am not thinking of you as a woman who happens to be an anthropologist."

Her laughter had stopped, and now she simply smiled, and shook her head.

"And I love your blouse," he said, in a tone of voice usually heard in confession.

Michelle was actually touched by his shyness. She would have liked to hold him—at least his hand; or better, to kiss him gently on the forehead, or eyelids. But she couldn't do that now—if for no other reason than for the fact that he was sitting across the table from her.

"You don't understand, do you?" he asked her, a bit anxiously.

"Of course not," she replied softly. "I understand."

After a long pause, Michelle got up and walked over to where...
Howard was sitting comfortably in his chair, which was turned at a forty-five degree angle from the table, perhaps a foot and a half back from it. She stopped, and stood directly in front of him, very close to him.

Howard looked up at her, uncertainly. Her breasts were just a little above his eye level, close enough that were he to rise, without exercising care, he might get one of them in his eye on his way up. That fact, plus the fact that she was just standing in front of him, saying nothing, made him more than uncertain; it made him uncomfortable. If he felt threatened at all by this "violation of his body space," he also felt uncertain, for her face was benign, she was smiling slightly, and now she'd put her hands lightly on the sides of his face. Confusion, certainly.

"Why don't you touch it?" she asked him gently.

Whatever is she talking about? he wondered wildly. Maybe the material. We were talking about her blouse. That's it. That must be what she means . . . I doubt it. And you know better. Look how she's standing; look how she's looking. She doesn't mean the material . . . You'd better find out what she means: you can't just sit here looking up at her like a fool forever! He was looking up at her, unaware that his face was easy for her to read as Dick and Jane. All of his confusion, and all of his fear, was, unconsciously, being expressed by the thousand little muscles under the skin
of his face.

"Go ahead," she suggested.

*Go ahead with what?!!* he demanded silently. "... I'm not sure what you mean..." is what he said; and without thinking--because he was suddenly unable to sit there any longer--he stood up, carefully. Now he stood right before her, a mere six inches separating them. She was looking up at him; his hands were dangling at his sides. He was fairly drunk, but he was very self conscious.

"Why don't you feel the silk? Feel it anywhere you'd like. Don't be afraid."

*Why should I be afraid?* he thought angrily. Yes, but I am. *Why should I?...* She wants me to touch her on the breasts, I know it... But what if I do, and... she didn't?... Damn, I can't just keep standing here...*not with my arms at my sides.*

Dr. Benoit put her arms around Dr. Feigenbaum's waist.

*There's no doubt about it now, Howard. Put your hands on her shoulders... That's it... Look into her eyes... God, she's got beautiful eyes--but there are wrinkles under them... You're stiff and awkward... Rest your forearms on her shoulders... That's right... That's better... She's smiling a bit more... She's trying to tell me something... My breath's coming fast... She's rubbing the small of my back, the lower anterior trapezius*
... I must say it feels good... Ah, maybe I should rub her, and touch the material... The silk... That's what this is supposed to be about... I see... All right; rub her shoulders, they look nice... There... That's it... Hey, I'd doing it... Look at her smiling... Son-of-a-gun!... Look what I'm doing!.... Wow... Oh, this silk does feel nice... Smile back at her; you've got a sickly smile on your face... More confidence! You're still looking sickly... That's a little better, but I think you're sneering now... Oh, this feels nice; I must say... Run your hands down her back... Good... She's got a nice strong back... I like it...

"This does feel nice," he said.

My voice cracked... She could hear the nervousness, I'm sure... She isn't going to reply... She's got a nice small waist... If I reach any lower I'll be able to feel her behind... Just keep your hands on the blouse, How, that's why you're supposed to be doing this... Hah! What a farce... We both know that's not why we're standing here... I'm sure I can touch her breasts... Then why don't you?... I'm scared... I know you are, but it's all right; I'm sure of it... How can I do it if I want to... My God! She's rubbing my behind!!!... Go ahead, rub her breasts... Look at this woman! She's brazen! She's smiling, and looking me right in the eye... How do
I look, I wonder . . . Smile! More confidence! My God!
It's getting hard to breath! . . . In fact . . . Yes . . .
Oh, my . . . I'm getting hard . . . My God! She's really
got a handful of my gluteous maximus! She's not timid, that's
for sure! . . . Her breasts . . . Grab her breasts! No,
don't grab them. Slide over to them . . . It's okay, I'm
sure of it . . . It's clear now . . . It's okay . . . Should
I grab both of them or just one? . . . Don't grab; slide over
to them . . . Keep smiling . . . Why won't she stop looking
into my eyes . . . I wish I could avert my eyes, but I don't
think I should . . . Her breasts . . . Touch her breasts
. . . How? It'll be awkward . . . Don't worry about it;
just do it . . . She's brazen, she'll understand . . . Oh,
my God . . . Do it, How! . . . Come on . . . Just pull
your arms in, and put your hands around her breasts . . . I
like her back . . . Her breasts, How! . . .

"I'm a little uncomfrotable," he said, pulling his
arms back into the valley of their chests, and then he let
his hands rest very lightly above each breast.

"Don't be afraid, cherie," she whispered, lifting her
arms to put her hands softly behind his neck. They were just
like that for, perhaps, fifteen seconds. Then, gently, she
pulled his head down that they might kiss.

Here is comes, he though with a logic so cool that
it surprised him. Lips met, and it was for him as if the
lights had gone out. Enthusiastically, but gently, he put his hands over her breasts; and like a man finding himself suddenly in the dark, he was unable to fully comprehend all the new and wonderful data coming in. For two or three moments he was completely without thoughts—and then they began breaking in, intermittently. His first thought was, How nice these breasts feel! And then he thought, I can feel the nipples right through the silk . . . and they're high and erect! . . . and they're a bit hard . . . while the breast itself is soft . . . Pay attention to the kiss, How . . . she's moving her head . . . easy . . . easy . . . My God! I'm getting hard! . . . I wonder if it will force her away . . . Oh, my . . . Dr. Benoit, I sure hope you know what we are doing . . . Oh, I love her breasts, and to think they're nothing more than the normal secondary sex characteristics . . . She doesn't seem to have any objections to my holding them . . . move your hands around a bit, How . . . that's right . . . what is this? . . . she's putting her tongue into my mouth . . . I guess I should do it back; apparently it is supposed to be sexy. I'm not sure I like it, though . . . I might be too tall for her . . . the way I'm bending down . . . we'd better stop . . . I've got to get some air . . . stop kissing . . . .

He broke away, pulling his head back to look at her—but when her eyes met his, he didn't know what to communi-
cate. His arms were still in that awkward, defensive look­
ing position, his hands on her breasts like they were dials he was manipulating.

"That was nice," she told him softly. He looked away, and uncertain, foolish grin upon his face. She waited until he looked back at her, and then, fastening her great green eyes on his, she told him, "Howard, maybe you don't know how much it means to a woman, sometimes, just to be held by a man ..." She gazed intently into his eyes, and after a brief pause, continued. "But it means a great deal ... Can you understand that?" She continued to search his eyes.

But he just smiled, and looked down, unable to say yes, or no. He felt foolish standing there with his hands on her breasts; therefore, he placed them lightly on her hips. Then, standing on her tiptoes, in one easy motion, she pulled his head gently down toward hers, and kissed him—briefly, and friendly—on the mouth. "Thank you," she told him, and once again did what she wanted to do in one deft motion: she took him by the hand, and took a step away from him. "I think I'd like to sit down, now, and listen to some good music." Her fine voice, full of French accent, sounded confident, and intimately persuasive to Howard. "And I'd like you to put your arm around me. Would you do that?"

A little inebriated, amazed a lot, and happy, Howard
said, "Sure," and his brain hopped around in his head.

So that's what happened. She turned on the radio, turned down the oil lamp, and retrieved two pillows from her bedroom, which they sat on, their backs leaning against the tapa covered wall, listening to music, and static, imported from France, and sipping wine--with his arm around her.

* * * * *

During the days that followed, Howard fell easily into a routine hundreds of millions of men would almost certainly envy. It was exciting at first, and/or challenging (depending upon the stimulus). For example: watching the Polynesian girls cavorting naked in and around the waterfall was, for Howard, exciting. Another example was the fishing he did daily--that was a challenge. But gradually the excitement and the challenge of his daily routine waned--at least, to a certain extent. In the days that followed, he had plenty of time to consider how-it-was where-he-was, and his thoughts, by degrees, shifted from his initially intense What-should-he-do-about-it? to a feeling of futile frustration considering What-could-he-do-about-it?, and then back to a subtle What-should-he-do-about-it? This time, however, he was considering
the question a bit differently. This time, when he considered the question, the answers didn't come back to him as moral imperatives, or even as practical considerations—rather, though he couldn't put his finger on it, vague suggestions were coming to him as equally vague affirmations of "what-really-is." In other words, an answer was coming to him, disguised as another question; and that question, even he was unable (because he was still unwilling) to articulate it was: Why should I do anything about it? . . . It wasn't as if he came by this new "answer" logically; it was circumstance, and intuition that fostered the new "answer." The new "answer" was not immediately accepted by Howard, but neither was it rejected. It was not confronted directly; it was not acted upon.

During one of the days that followed, Howard was down by the old swimming hole, hiding behind a number of ferns (his usual spot) watching Turia and the girls gambol, when suddenly he thought he heard laughing behind him. He turned around quickly and there, not more than fifteen feet away from him, stood two men. H was caught, discovered: a voyeur in Paradise. Fortunately, both men were laughing— that seemed, to Howard, to mean that maybe they wouldn't string him up to a tree, or roast him.

He rose from his crouched position, turned and tentatively took a few steps towards them. One was about forty or
fifty, and missing two teeth in the front of his open, laughing mouth; the other was about twenty-five or thirty, a well built, good looking man.

"Haege mai te par'are ra' fare. Ua pe te fare," the younger one told Howard.

Howard walked up to the two of them, not knowing what to say, not knowing how to say anything. He looked down at them, for he was several inches taller than either of them, and made a vague, foolish gesture, half heartedly attempting to say: I'm sorry; I don't know what to say; I can't speak your language.

From their point of view, it was strange enough to see a tall young white man on their island; it was funny to catch him watching the women bathing; and it was mystifying to observe his awkwardness, and his seeming inability to speak, or even understand what is spoken. They knew of the white woman—they had seen her, and their women told them of their encounters with her—but she could, to a certain extent, communicate with the; indeed, the women liked her. But this tall one . . .

The older man, still smiling, spoke to Howard. Howard shrugged. Then the younger one asked Howard a question. Howard felt exceedingly simple as he forced a smile (which he felt was a simpleton's smile), and shrugged again.

The old man sighed, shook his head, and said something
to his companion. They both sat down on the ground, right where they'd been standing, and with a wave of the hand, the old man told Howard to sit down there with them. Howard understood and sat down, cross-legged, facing the both of them, as if they were about to begin a pow-wow.

He looked at the faces of the men before him, and the golden brown bodies, dressed only in a pareu loin cloth. They looked at a tall, angular, obviously young white man, dressed in long shorts (Bermudas) with a strange design upon them (plaid), a thin, white, short sleeved shirt, and cheap canvas shoes with a rubber bottom.

The older man spoke to Howard slowly and clearly, and at the same time used his hands, arms, shoulders, body, and face to convey information, to communicate. Howard watched the man carefully, imagining that he (Howard) was an adventurer on some sort of mission, or a frontiersman confronting two Indian chiefs. He forced himself to stop imagining and pay attention to what the man was trying to say. At the same time, he felt relieved because it looked as if the two men weren't about to "press charges," as it were.

The older man was smiling encouragingly, and was in earnest as he pointed from Howard to the place where, even now, the girls were bathing, and playing. Howard nodded, though he had very little idea of what the man was trying to say. The man made a gesture with both hands--on each, his
four fingers were touching his thumb. It was, Howard felt, related, somehow, to an Italian gesture—but he didn't know Italian gestures, either. Then the older man repeated several times, the following: Motoro va' ra'ata porua, using his hand to signify Howard, and then pointing his hand to where the girls were splashing about.

Then the young man touched Howard on the knee to get his full attention, and as Howard watched, the man pointed from Howard to where the girls were, and with the index finger and thumb of his left hand forming a circle, the middle two fingers of his right hand were thrust in and out of the circle several times. "Tu motoro va ra-vahine," he told Howard carefully, looking intensely into Howard's eyes to see if Howard understood. "Ta'oto va'vahine e motu i motoro," he said insistently. "Mani'atea?"

Without realizing it, Howard understood the last question and shook his head, no.

The two men looked at one another, and smiled, sadly. The younger one stood up. The older one said something to Howard, who smiled slightly, and nodded agreeably. Then the older one laughed, and he, too, stood up. Howard stood up. The two men just looked at him for a moment, and then gave a funny little wave, turned, and walked back to the path. A moment later, the older man returned, smiling, and held out his hand for Howard to take, and shake—which Howard did,
bowing slightly as he did so. The man continued smiling as they shook hands. Then the man hurried back the way he'd come.

Howard stood there, surrounded by tropical vegetation, uncertain where to go, or what to do. He felt relieved, and at the same time, perplexed, and at the same time, even amused. He had a sense of being an actor in an absurd play. He'd not been able to say a word, much less articulate a position, and it's worked out very well--he thought.

He started back. Walking down the trail towards fare iti he thought that they might have thought that he was dumb, or unintelligent, and yet, wistfully, he thought he'd sensed a concern on their part for him. That was funny, and that was nice.

Then he thought that the two men might tell everyone what they'd seen; word would get around, and he'd get into trouble--that'd be most unfortunate . . . However, it was possible that word would not get around, and everything would be all right. He thought about that for a few minutes. Then he started a new train of thought, telling himself to recall as much as he could of what the men had said. He was able to recall only three words: ta'oto (after all, that was the name of Michelle's maid), vahine (it was common knowledge that that meant "girl"), and motoro. He'd have to try and find out what ta'oto meant, if anything, and also the meaning of the
word motoro (a word they'd used perhaps a half a dozen times).

Here and there bright sunlight found its way to the ground through the dense vegetation overhead, in random patches, spotting the leaves of various kinds of bushes, creating a baroque effect of verdant beauty as Howard, rapt in thought, walked unaware through it all. Birds sang. Suddenly, for no apparent reason, Howard remembered the Bird of Paradise, and then, where he was; and thereafter, until he walked into the clearing of the camp, he remained attentive—not to his inner chatter—but to the jungle, and the denizens thereof.

During dinner that evening, Howard was fairly quiet—indeed, Michelle remarked it. He had already decided that the way to find out the meanings of those words was to allow Michelle to drink all the wine she wanted, and then, maybe, if she was feeling expansive, maybe he could get her to tell him.

So when Ta'oto served coffee after dinner, Howard chose that time to ask Michelle in a seemingly offhand way, whether the name Ta'oto meant anything.

In a voice that sounded gentle, and not at all suspicious, she asked him why he asked.

"Oh, I just wondered," he said.

"... I see," she said. "Well, yes, it does."

"What's that?"
She smiled. After a brief pause, she said, "It means, 'to lay down'."

"Oh . . . ," Howard said.

Michelle began pouring the coffee.

"There is one more word," Howard said.

Still pouring, Michelle asked him what it was.

"Motoro," he said.

"Wherever did you pick that up?" she asked him.

"Oh . . . it just came to me," he said idiotically.

"Maybe I overheard it in a conversation, and the sound of the word stayed with me. I don't know. You know how these things are. It sounds nice, don't you think? Mo-tor-o."

"It sounds lovely," she said, as she handed him his cup of coffee.

"Well, what does it mean, please?"

She crossed her legs, and holding her cup and saucer nearly chest high with one hand, stirred it with the other, all the while, apparently, considering the question. "You know, of course," she said, carefully, "that I know that if I tell you a word meaning of the indigenous language I shall be violating an agreement we made--isn't that right?--and that's what you are asking me to do now."

You agreed! he thought angrily; but he said nothing, believing that his only chance of inducing her to tell him the answer, was to appear humble. There was no other place he
could learn the answer; so he said nothing, and acted humble.

"I'll make an exception just this one time--if you insist," she told him, as she took out a Galois, and lit it. Howard said he insisted--if she didn't mind.

"Very well, then," she said, exhaling the smoke through her nostrils. "Motoro . . . motoro is a courtship custom."

"Oh, I see," Howard said uncertainly. "Uh, could you, perhaps, be a bit more definitive."

She offered the following, after a brief pause.

"I'd like to make a suggestion, Howard. The only way to really understand something is experientially. The next best way, I think, is probably through observation. You are a scientist. Suppose you observe motoro. You will know what it means according to how well you observe it."

Howard nodded, not certain whether Dr. Benoit had suggested something he'd like, or if she'd suggested something that would prove difficult, perhaps even arduous. "How would you suggest I go about observing this . . . motoro?"

"I think you might be able to observe it tonight," she said. "Perhaps when you finish your coffee. Do you know where the waterfall is?"

He paused before answering. If he admitted that he did, he'd be virtually admitting more--but then, she'd never told him not to explore. And in any case, she'd asked the question innocently enough. And besides that, maybe she knew
he knew. So he said, "Yes."

"Good. I would suggest you go there, sit down somewhere where you won't be observed, and watch, and listen."

Howard said he'd do it. Dr. Benoit said, "Good"; and she cautioned him about "seeing too quickly." She told him to observe well, and not be deceived by appearances. She would not tell him more than that.

She finished her coffee, and her cigarette, at just about the same time. After snuffing out her cigarette in the ash tray, she stood up, and extended her hand. "Good-night," she said, "and good luck."

Taking her hand and shaking it, Howard was puzzled: it seemed so formal to be shaking her hand now... But it was obvious that as far as she was concerned, it was time for him to go, so he said good-night, and went out into the night.

* * *

It was a bright half moon, and a clear night--but the trees and all that was tall and arborescent above, intercepted the light, creating patches of diffuse silver scattered randomly on the verdant earth, and on the luxuriant tropical underbrush, as well. And the waterfall, and the pond, were open,
and fully exposed to the stars and the moon.

Howard sat and waited for nearly two hours by the waterfall before he finally decided to call it a night, to return to his bed in fare iti. But on his way back, walking thoughtfully through the bush, he thought he heard the sound of moaning. He followed the sound, being very careful not to make any noise that would give his presence away, when suddenly, he discovered a pair of lovers, not 20 feet away from him, obviously in the height of passion, obviously near the end.

Uncertain, and spellbound, he watched them, hidden as he was by a large, thick, wild bush of passion fruit.

It was over in moments, and the couple, completely oblivious to the watcher in the shadows, collapsed happily together. Young Howard stood transfixed in the darkness, his eyes full of the scene occurring before him, his head full of self-accusations, conceptual contradictions, poetic impulses, and sheer amazement. He was able to make out the figures as well as he was because first, his eyes had become accustomed to the darkness, and second, their legs had been illuminated by a large patch of moonlight. Even the most jaded voyeur might have been fascinated to see, during the passion, their straining legs moving under the spotlight—as it were.

So that's how it's done! our hero thought. It's really incredible! ... I wonder if that's motoro ... some court-
ship custom! This must be the end of it . . . I had no idea that love making was so vigorous. I don't know how middle aged people can do it . . . Well, How, . . . this was, after all, to be an extension of your education; it's a little more than you, or anyone else, I'm sure, anticipated, but, that's all right . . . it looks as if you're going to grow up, after all . . .

Stealthily he withdrew, and made his way back to camp. By the time he blew out his oil lamp, and got into his bed at fare iti, his breathing had returned to normal, but his thinking would never be quite the same again.

* * * *

The next afternoon, as they were having coffee, the following conversation took place.

Dr. Benoit said, "Well, Howard, did you have any luck last night?"

Howard replied that "in a manner of speaking, I think I did."

She asked him what he meant, as she poured the coffee. "Oh," he said, "I came unexpectedly on two people engaged in sexual intercourse. Is that motoro?" he asked, matter
of factly. "Or is it a consequence thereof?"

Dr. Benoit nodded, as though to herself, as she stirred her coffee. Then she asked him if he knew the story of the four blind Indians and the elephant. Howard said that it sounded familiar, but could she please touch on it again to refresh his memory.

"Four blind Indians were asked to describe an elephant," Dr. Benoit began. "They'd never seen one, having been blind, apparently, from birth. Each was permitted to touch the elephant, and then asked to describe it. The first said that the elephant was like a boa constrictor: he had felt the trunk. The second said that obviously an elephant was like a grove of trees: he had touched only the legs. The third one disagreed, saying the elephant clearly was like a wall: he had felt the side of the elephant. And the fourth one disagreed with them all. He had felt the tail, and he said that an elephant seemed to be nothing more than a fly whisk . . . Now: what's the point, do you suppose, of my telling you this story?"

Howard wasn't sure, and he shook his head to let her know that.

Dr. Benoit paused, and then said, "All right. Do you remember that night on the beach when you saw a man chasing a woman? . . . You called my attention to it."

"Yes," Howard replied, "I remember."
"That was motoro," Dr. Benoit said. "Had you asked me then what was going on, and had I answered, motoro, probably you would have thought that motoro means a chase, or possibly, play." She paused again—this time to take a Galois from its blue package, and light it up.

Howard was listening closely. He nodded one curt nod to show her that he was.

"Now, had you come upon that couple last night, earlier," she continued, "you might have heard her cry out, or seen her apparently resisting the man—and if you were told that that was motoro, you might have come to believe that the word means rape. As a matter of fact, I have a Polynesian-English dictionary that says that motoro means rape, but that's nonsense as everyone here knows, and as any good anthropologist familiar with the area knows. It is, perhaps, fair to say that it is 'mock-rape'—or a custom, or a game, but definitely it is not rape, per se. You saw the couple making love. Did it appear to you that she was being raped?"

Howard, who wasn't at all certain that he'd know the difference, replied that it didn't.

"Did they appear to be enjoying one another?" Dr. Benoit continued, sounding rather like an attorney for the defense.

And Howard, who thought he would have been embarrassed by all this talk about sexual intercourse, was surprised at
how maturely he felt he was handling it, all things considered. "Well," he began to articulate carefully, "it would be my considered opinion that neither party was objecting very strenuously to the activity."

"Howard, for the love of God: can't you be more forthright when you speak?" Dr. Benoit inquired, with a bit of an edge on her voice. "Here is a simple question. Please try to give me a simple answer. Did they appear to be enjoying one another?!

Howard was taken aback by her sudden exasperation, but then replied, "Yes, I think they were enjoying one another." She gets very tense sometime, he thought.

"Very well then . . . Had you said to me: I saw two people making love last night, having a wonderful time--was that motoro? I could have answered Yes, and been correct. Thereafter you would probably believe that the word motoro means sexual intercourse, or something like that. Do you see what I mean? It's like the blind Indians."

Dr. Benoit wasn't finished: she continued her exposition--but Howard wasn't listening only to her words. He thought he saw a little more tension in her face than usual, and her temper was obviously a bit on the short side. Howard studied her through a cloud of blue smoke: she was smoking with more energy, and less charm than was her habit. Howard had noticed (and noticed he'd noticed, which pleased him)
that she'd crossed and uncrossed her legs several times. Even her clothes made her appear less attractive than usual: they were looser, almost ill fitting. Vaguely Howard recognized that Dr. Benoit was not her usual self, but he had to listen to what she was saying: he therefore had to leave the question unsolved.

"There is truth, there is personal experience, and there are words. Knowledge vis à vis observation is improved when it comes through personal experiences. The knowledge you acquired through observation last night was good, but limited. You observed only part of motoro." Dr. Benoit ran her hand over her hair, and then patted it a few times. "Words are of even less value than personal experience and/or observation," she went on. They are restrictive, and are but a fragment of the truth—and the pity is, almost everyone mistakes them for truth or falsehood. This is not only unfortunate, and regrettable, it is often dangerous. Had you my dictionary yesterday, and you looked up the word motoro, and read the dictionary's definition, that's all the word would mean to you thereafter: rape. But because you have seen it, at least part of it, perhaps you know that the word rape is not correct. That wasn't what was happening last night. And yet, that was motoro . . ." She sighed, and sat back in her chair.

Howard nodded, and said, "I see."
"And now, Cherie, if you don't mind, I think I'll go lie down. I'm not feeling very good."

"Oh, I'm sorry," Howard exclaimed. "I hope it's not serious."

"Not at all," she said. "It's just one of those things women have to put up with every month. But come to dinner. I may not join you, but you're welcome, of course." So saying, she stood up.

Howard followed suit. "I hope you'll feel better," he said, and she nodded. Then he nodded, and after a brief pause, said, "I'll look in on you later." And then he was gone.

* * *

The next morning, his raison d'être at the ocean's edge completed, Howard decided to explore. So it was that he walked some considerable distance away from the camp, following the shore line, until, rounding a curve on the beach, he found himself standing before a small, lovely, clear, blue lagoon. It was perhaps 70 yards across, protected from the ocean's waves by a coral reef, and therefore, calm. The water sparkled in the sunlight. The white sand surrounding it
was obviously hospitable to a number of tall palm trees which, in a ring, grew tall around the lagoon. The view was superb, and Howard gazed at it, admiringly. His nostrils were full of the combined scents of salt water, washed up sea life, and of tropical vegetation. He heard only the sound of the surf. He felt warm and comfortable.

Suddenly, a brown body appeared in his line of vision, not more than forty yards away. It was a young boy, perhaps 10 years old; apparently he had been crouched down, digging in the sand, and when he straightened up, the movement caught Howard's eye.

"Hi," Howard called, and waved, and started walking over to him. The boy seemed unafraid, but curious. In his hand he held a box-shaped container. When Howard got closer, he saw that there was a spear down by the boy's feet.

The boy said something in Polynesian, and Howard told the boy not to worry, he was a friend. Of course, the boy didn't understand English any more than Howard understood Polynesian, but Howard made himself smile at the boy to show him that he, Howard, was friendly. Awkwardly, he patted the boy on the head (thinking, it wasn't so long ago that Uncle Mark used to pat me on the head . . .) and ruffled up the boy's hair, asking in a loud, clear voice, "how-are-you?" The boy, understandably, was uncertain as to what to make of the man, and what was happening, but he tolerated it, and
waited for the next development.

"Where-did-you-get-them?" Howard asked the boy, again speaking slowly and distinctly, and pointing to the half a dozen or so crabs in the container. Since the boy obviously did not understand him, Howard pointed to the crabs, and then, his hand over his eyes ala Hiawatha, he looked up and down the beach in a not very subtle pantomime. Still the boy didn't seem to understand, so Howard continued the charade looking frantically now among the rocks, and then, under them. In so doing, he discovered the answer. While not really looking, he was surprised to see a crab scurry towards the sea when he lifted one of the rocks. The crabs lived under the rocks! In the past two weeks, searching for bait along the beach, he'd had to find a crab out for a stroll; he hadn't known where to look, really. Howard then began looking under all the rocks around him, and found another crab, which he tried to pick up, but dropped immediately: crabs have a fairly effective means of protest. But now he knew where to find them. He smiled at the boy, and tried to indicate by tapping his temple with his index finger that he had figured it out. He began uncovering still more rocks, and the next time he uncovered a crab, the youngster suddenly offered the crab the handle of his spear. The crab grabbed it, and the boy picked up the spear and hurled the crab into the container with a deft little movement.
Howard nodded, trying to convey his understanding. The boy smiled for the first time, tentatively. The two of them teamed up—successfully, it turned out—catching several more crabs in this manner.

Then the boy, armed with his spear, walked out into the water, up to his knees, and waited. Howard observed. He observed not only the boy's technique in fishing with a spear, but also the boy's pride and delight in being able to teach him, a white man, how to spear a fish. The boy caught a fish about one in every four throws of the spear, and he threw it on an average of a minute and a half—which meant, Howard figured, that with the patience and skill of this young Polynesian boy, one could catch a fish every six or seven minutes. So, when the boy invited him to try it, Howard took the spear, and tried his luck and skill. After twelve minutes, and twenty one tries, he managed to wound a fish—but it got away. But a short time later, he was rewarded by catching a small parrot fish. Watching the fish wiggle about at the end of the prong, its brilliant colors fading before his eyes, the boy yelling out congratulations in Polynesian, Howard was full of feeling, and practically devoid of thought.

Perhaps a half hour later, the boy, who now had eight fish, indicated to Howard that he had to go. The boy was using mostly sign language now, occasionally enunciating a few words in Polynesian, much in the same way as Howard occasionally
did in English, slowly and carefully. The two of them tried to communicate through broad pantomime, and both smiled a lot—probably more than they felt like.

Howard offered to shake the boy's hand as the boy made off to leave. The boy appeared not to understand Howard's gesture, so Howard took the boy's hand, and shook it, smiling all the while, saying—and pointing to himself with his left hand—"Howard . . . Howard." The boy smiled back and said, "Toari, Toari." Howard guessed that the boy had understood, and given Howard his name—and Howard guessed correctly. By and large, it had been quite a successful cooperative adventure in what was, for the most part, non-verbal communication; and Howard had a sense of unanticipated satisfaction as he walked back to the camp, his fish in his hand. Now all he had to do was find someone to show him how to prepare and cook the thing.

*   *   *   *

He couldn't find anyone to show him how to prepare and cook his fish. Ta'oto wouldn't, or couldn't, communicate with him. He had, as a matter of fact, already learned that in Polynesia the sexes are socially segregated, and it was
unseemly for a Polynesian girl to be seen talking with a man unless he was her husband (though this didn't stop "unofficial meetings and communication"). So, eventually, Howard just fried his catch, and ate a bit of it (but it had shrunk somewhat, and seemed full of bones . . ).

* * *

Later, arriving at Dr. Benoit's for coffee and sweets, Michelle handed him two blue aerogram envelopes telling him that Tioti had been to Papeete in the boat, and returned, bringing, among other things, Howard's mail.

Howard recognized immediately his mother's handwriting, and his father's.

"If you have no objection," Howard told Michelle, "I'd like to go over to my place and read these."

"Don't be silly. Of course. You may come and go as you please," she answered.

"I'll be back in twenty minutes," he said.

"That's fine," she answered. "But come whenever you like. I'll keep the coffee hot."

So Howard went over to fare iti, and this is what he read:
Dear Howard,

Your father and I have been terribly worried about you. How are you, darling? Are you warm enough? Do you want me to send you your slippers? Just write and tell me what I can do for you. I'm so worried about you. For example, who is doing your laundry? Louise tells me you're where the famous artist Van Go was. How is it there? Do you need warm socks. We all miss you. At least when you were in New Haven we could talk to you on the phone every week, but your father says he doesn't think there are any phones where you are. Is that true? If not, please let us know your number. Also, are there any Jewish people there? I hope so. Go to shul if there's one there, and be sociable with the families there. I know how it is. They will always help you. Uncle Mark and Aunt Sylvia send their love. So does Skipper. Your father was walking her the other day and she was attacked by a large black dog, and your father feels that maybe she is pregnant now. That's all we need. More puppies. Do you remember how hard it was to get rid of Skipper's last bunch? It's been rainy a lot lately. And chuck has gone up five cents a pound. I had my hair done Wednesday. Your cousin Marlene is causing Aunt Sylvia conniption fits. It seems she wants to drop out of the university already. Well, darling, that's all for now. Please write us, and tell us how you like it there. Do you have any friends? Write us because we all miss you.
And love you, and are concerned about you. Especially your father and me. You should only be well and happy. Sei gesundt.

Your loving mother,

Mother

Howard shook his head slightly, and even smiled a bit. Then he opened the other letter and this is what he read:

Dear Son,

So, how is it? And how are you, How? Your mother's concerned about you. Do us all a favor and write her, will you?

Listen, I want to tell you something. You know I was over in Guam during the war. I know what it's like over there. So here's what I want to tell you.

Have a good time, son— but be careful. You're old enough now to grow up. I think it's only proper that you should— but be careful— you understand? Take precautions. I don't expect you to have a goyische cup— you understand? Have a good time, and take advantage of your circumstances— but be careful!

Write and let us know how you're doing. But remember, How, your mother's going to be reading the letter . . .
I hope you are well, and making use of living while you can. Take it easy, son—in fact, take it any way you can—but be careful!

Dad

Howard folded the blue aerogram, and again, shook his head slowly—and again, smiled a bit. He put the aerogram on the oil drum, on top of his mother's letter, and lay back on his bed, and looked at the ceiling.

* * *

Dinner that evening was generally without much conversation. Howard told Dr. Benoit about the incident at the lagoon, and she smiled approvingly, saying, moreover, that she had a larger spear somewhere in the house, which she'd give to him before he left that evening. Howard discovered that that pleased him: suddenly he was an enthusiast of spear fishing. Dr. Benoit also told him of her plans to go to the other side of the island next week. She said there was another village there which she'd not made contact with as yet, and felt that she was about ready to do so. Howard asked her if he might accompany her, and she replied: maybe. She discouraged any more conversation about the coming expedition,
however, and showed him out early—with the spear in his hand.

Howard didn't mind; he was rapidly falling in love with nights in Polynesia. He felt happy that night, walking along the beach, under a million stars, his newly acquired spear in his hand. The surf continually pounded the shore, and then rolled back—only to come crashing into the shore again, maybe ten seconds later.

At one point Howard asked himself why he was so happy, and the answer came to him, articulated clearly in his mind: Isn't it obvious? Howard stopped, literally, and considered the answer that had come as a question. At the same time, as he stood there on the beach, he was uncomfortably aware that if anyone were watching him, they would think that he was listening to voices—which, in a sense, he was ... 

He resumed his walking. How, something is going on. Don't be so foolish as to ignore it. She's right, you know ... That night she wanted to race, and I didn't, she said I should remember where I'm at. She was telling me that what was meritorious at home isn't necessarily meritorious here ... You're in a primitive place, and noone—except Michelle—cares what Dr. Larson is doing at Michigan, or what Bateson views as the applications of the Von Neumannian Game—and I don't know that she really cares, either ... It's just a question of doing the little you've got to do every day ...
You're going to be here another six or seven months; don't tell me you're going to be the same precocious young man when you leave here as when you arrived. You've been slightly eccentric, and backwards socially long enough . . . Michelle is intelligent, and you can learn a lot from her, if you'll just allow yourself to . . . I'll wager she wants to make love . . . with me . . . I don't know if I can do that . . . Well, I guess it's about time that I learn how . . . Don't worry, it'll come naturally . . . I think . . . Anyhow, you saw how it was done the other night . . . and she'll show you if there is any question about it . . . I don't know. Dad even told you to--what else do you need? A written directive? . . . I know that you're anxious, but don't worry: everything will be all right . . . How do you know? How do I know? . . . It's obvious . . . Maybe. But I'm so incredibly inexperienced; I'm a virgin! . . . I know that! That's okay . . . Just don't worry, How: I don't think your inexperience will disqualify you . . . How do you know? . . .

And so it went--as he walked down the beach, and then as he returned to the camp--and then in his bed in fare iti. He spent another half hour in variations of the same monologue as he lay awake in the darkness before his thoughts gradually slowed down, and darkened, and finally assumed another shape. And then it was morning.

He woke up like a young man who hadn't a care in the
world. The hut was full of fresh air and sunlight, and lying there, he wondered for the first time about the kinds of birds out there making all that chatter. He stretched, and then suddenly he remembered that he was going spear fishing; he got up in one quick motion. He slipped on his Bermudas, checking to make sure his toothbrush was in one pocket, and the thin bar of soap he had was in the other. Then he put on his white shirt, picked up his newly acquired spear, and walked out of fare iti into the bright sunlight.

It was always sunny in the morning. Often—usually between eleven and two—there'd be a brief shower, but 20 minutes later the sun would be shining again; it would be either warm, or hot again, and the humid air would be heavy with the various smells of the tropics.

He walked enthusiastically down to the beach, feeling the warm sand under his feet, running through his toes, and feeling the early heat of the morning on his left side. Howard had always been a creature of habit: in his early years and then later at the university, and now, he noted, it was beginning to happen on Rapa. He was beginning to feel secure on the beach. For Howard, habit meant security, and security promoted contentment, and often, enjoyment. For the first time since he'd arrived, he was confident that everything was going to work out all right.

He arrived at the lagoon about a half hour later. He saw that his young friend was already there, spearfishing.
"Hello," he called and waved to the boy. The boy waved back. The two of them spent a minute in good-natured, uncertain, ineffective non-verbal communication, and then the boy resumed his concentration, his spear poised, and Howard took his own position in the water, perhaps ten yards away.

Some time later, when the boy had eight fish, and Howard had three, the boy came over to Howard and asked him a question. Howard could only shrug, and make a Stan Laurel face to tell the boy he didn't know, he didn't understand Polynesian, he was sorry. The boy gave a nod of his head, indicating that Howard should come along with him, and Howard understood that, and did follow the boy. There was a fish in each of Howard's front pockets, and one that was too large to be forced into a pocket was head down, in the front of Howard's Bermudas, the tail over Howard's navel.

Not knowing what to expect, but believing nothing could be wrong on a day like this one was, Howard followed the boy a short way up the beach, and then into the jungle on a narrow trail.

They were on the path for three or four minutes when the boy stopped, and turned to Howard. In the kind of voice usually reserved for talking to a child, speaking slowly and carefully, the boy told Howard, "Nea va a m'vehea. Tiocar a motoro ma ma'hoha poota." Howard caught the word motoro,
but of course, that was all he understood. He wondered that the boy should mention motoro, especially so early in the morning, but he nodded—first affirmatively, and then, for no apparent reason, negatively. The boy, apparently, understood that the tall, young white man did not understand him, and so he sighed, and shrugged, and continued on into the jungle.

A few minutes later they came into a small clearing. There in the clearing, stood one small hut. In front of the hut, engaged in some sort of native activity (Howard didn't know what) was a woman, naked to the waist, wearing the native pareau. She was probably in her late twenties, or early thirties, and, Howard saw at a glance, was pretty ugly.

It was strange for there to be a hut all by itself, Howard realized, as he noted the boy's bid for him to follow. Somewhat reluctant now, he followed the boy up to the hut.

The woman stood up, apparently unafraid, and smiled at Howard. Howard smiled another variation of his suddenly newly acquired Stan Laurel smile—a rather simple, and sickly smile. The boy stood between the two of them. Then, almost formally, Howard thought, he said something, one word, to Howard, and to the woman he said, "Howard." Howard could barely believe his ears: the boy had remembered his name, and apparently had just made an introduction... Howard smiled and nodded to the woman, who did likewise. Howard was very impressed with the boy, but at the same time he had no
desire to stay, and try to communicate, or do anything to, or with, the woman. Therefore, after a slight bow, a smile, and some nodding, Howard tried to take his leave. How to tell the boy that he was afraid that he had to go. Unconsciously or unthinkingly, he tapped on his left wrist with the index finger of his right hand: the object was to say: it was "time" to go—but not only was he wearing no wrist watch, these people undoubtedly would not know what it meant even if he was wearing one! So he had to find another way to explain his sudden departure—or be rude—and he didn't want to do that. What he finally did was look surprised, very, and then point from himself to another place, vaguely in the direction of the camp. The woman continued to smile, without, as far as Howard could see, a glimmer of intelligence behind her eyes; the boy appeared uncertain at first, and then, a bit saddened: he seemed to understand that Howard was about to leave. Howard offered the boy his hand, and the boy took it, and they shook hands. Then Howard waved good-bye, nodded and bowed a few more times, and turned, hurried across the clearing, and was gone down the path from whence he'd come.

He swam in the lagoon, and then walked back towards camp.

Later that afternoon, Howard and Michelle had coffee and fish. Howard had given the three fish he'd caught to
Ta'oto who prepared them nicely in a batter made from bananas. Michelle said they were delicious, and told Howard she was proud of him for becoming so proficient at spearfishing. Howard smiled, and accepted the compliment graciously. When Michelle asked him what else he'd done during the day, he said, "nothing." She asked him if he hadn't become bored, and he said while he was bored occasionally, he was also enjoying himself; he said he never dreamed his post-doctoral research would be in rest and relaxation. She smiled. Howard didn't tell her about his encounter with the woman earlier in the day. He wasn't quite sure why he didn't, but he had decided not to tell her: that's all, she didn't have to know everything.

They didn't talk much during dinner that evening. They had no friends in common, they weren't keeping up with the news, so there were only two things that they could talk about: themselves, and the world of theories, ideas, and academic information. Since neither of them was the sort who really liked to talk about their life, past or future, their conversation, for the most part, was about what one might read, and speculate about—or what had happened during the day (and Michelle was pretty closed mouthed about that!).

During dinner not much was said, but somehow the French Decadent poets came up. It turned out that Michelle liked them very much—Arthur Rimbaud in particular. Howard admitted
that he didn't know as much about them as he would like to, but he'd heard that they'd used dope of some sort—did she know that? Yes, she said; she knew. She asked him then what he thought about their using hashish, and opium, and he said he didn't know; perhaps it was justifiable for a poet. Anyhow, he concluded, what they did was their own business—as long as they did not hurt anyone else; Michelle nodded. When Howard asked her her opinion, she said she quite agreed with him. When Howard asked her to express herself more fully, she changed the subject, saying that she didn't feel like talking right then—perhaps later. They had coffee, and wine, and then they danced for a while. Howard was beginning to like dancing. He was surprised to find that he was good at it; and while it was slightly embarrassing to him, an unusual thing to do—dancing with your mentor—he liked it, anyway.

So he was saddened slightly when she showed him out—early, again. He said goodnight like a man, and took another long walk along the beach, under a million stars, asking himself just what he was doing alone on the island of Rapa—with only a small number of Polynesians paying him a little attention, and the one person with whom he could speak, a middle aged woman, who, moreover, managed their conversations, and seemed to him to be alternately hot and cold as regards her feelings toward him... It was, to use a favorite phrase of his father's, "a helluva note"... What did it all mean,
he wondered, and what should he do about it? And did he even want her affection, after all? . . .

The next day he walked around the island; that is to say, he covered the entire circumference of the island, by walking along the beach, and he did it in slightly less than four hours. Then he swam in the surf, and then he sat up on the great stone where he used to fish, and gazed, and gazed, at the ocean. He missed coffee (and that meant lunch), but he didn't care: it was time he began to assert his independence—he decided.

By 7:30 or 8:00 (he didn't know what time it was: he'd put his wrist watch away several days ago) he was very hungry, and he went over to Michelle's for their customary dinner.

Michelle answered the door wearing the familiar blue silk blouse that he liked so well, and her snug, short shorts.

"Hi," she said, opening the door for him.

"Hi," he responded, guarded, but hopeful.

No sooner was he in than she took his hand, and led him into the dining room. Then she turned to him, and standing directly in front of him said, "Guess what?". He nodded his head as if to say: I can't; what?, and she said, "Today is my brithday."

"Well," he said, and then he said, "Congratulations." He stood there, like a dummy, looking down at her upturned face. She looks better tonight than she has recently . . . I
wonder what she's standing like that for? . . . She seems to want to be kissed . . .

"Howard," she said easily. "Sometimes you amaze me."

"Why? How?"

"Don't you know that in your country, and mine, a gentleman gives a lady, at the very least, a kiss on her birthday?" She looked searchingly into his eyes.

He nodded that no, he didn't know that.

Then, speaking softly she said, "You wouldn't let a lady go unkissed on the one birthday she has every two years, now, would you?" Michelle was a past master of the proper tone to take when requesting something of a man: often, as in this case, she made it sound as if she were teasing him, gently--rather than making a serious request--so that he couldn't refuse without appearing like a pompous jerk, or feeling like a fool.

"No," he replied, "of course not." He wasn't certain whether he should kiss her on the cheek, or the forehead, or the mouth--but she was: at the last moment, as his head came down, uncertainly, she put her hands on either side of his face, and drew his mouth to hers. In spite of the fact that Michelle was old enough to be his mother, Howard enjoyed kissing her a lot more than he enjoyed kissing his mother. It was nothing more than the physical meeting of a couple of pairs of lips, four flesh covered sets of muscles, a little
obicular osculation . . . and yet . . . He drew back, and looked into Michelle's eyes, and was convinced that she had enjoyed it, too. "I must say," he said, smiling (in what was the beginning of a dry and sophisticated style in the new, cool, mature Howard Feigenbaum), "it's a very nice custom we have."

Michelle was pleased with his response, and nodded in agreement. "I agree with you, Cherie," she smiled, "and what makes it so nice is that one does not really have to wait for a birthday to do it. Anytime is a good time. And now," she said, taking him by the hand again, "I want you to sit down, because we are going to have a wonderful dinner tonight."

Sitting at the table, Howard asked, "Is this in honor of your birthday?"

"But of course," she answered with a smile. "That, plus the fact that I have such an esteemed guest dining with me this evening."

Howard smiled back, approvingly--and grateful.

The table was already covered by perhaps a half dozen dishes: popoi, po'e, watermelon, 'ape, bananas, and taro; also, a bottle of French wine, and a bottle of pickled fruits, from Roumania.

Looking over the table, Howard declared enthusiastically, "This is really something, Michelle." Then he
looked up at her, and kidded, "I'm certainly delighted that you invited me to your birthday party."

Sitting across from him now, Michelle reached for a piece of watermelon. "Just don't eat too much."

Howard was helping himself to some po' e. "Okay," he said. "Any reason? I mean, are these things being rationed now?" As soon as he'd said it, he regretted it. The question made him sound either greedy, or ungrateful, and he'd just meant to be humorous.

"Yes," Michelle said, "there is a reason."

"What's that?" Howard asked, adding, "If you don't mind telling me."

"Do you see that?" she asked, indicating a hookah, or water pipe, about three feet tall, standing against the wall.

"Oh . . . Yes. That's a hookah, isn't it? Where did you get it? Where is it from?"

"I brought it over here with me," she told him. "It's from Iran."

"Very nice," he commented, and after a thoughtful moment, took some popoi, and bananas.

"I would like for you to join me in a smoke after dinner, if you'd like to--and it's better if you've not eaten too much," Michelle told him.

"Oh . . ." Howard said slowly. After a pause he asked her what it was that they were going to smoke.

"It is a very special mixture, Cherie, from the
Howard ate some poòp thoughtfully, and then asked her, "But what is it, Michelle? What are the contents of this mixture?"

Michelle sighed. "First, I wish to point out that you are doing it again: asking for words, for a label. However," she went on, "this time you are entitled to know. Actually, I think you know already. It is hashish. I would like you to join me, Cherie, and at least try it. I can assure you, it won't hurt you, and I think you'll find it most interesting. Will you try it?"

What Michelle didn't realize was that while Howard was rather inhibited socially, he was also quite curious about certain things which appealed to his scientific imagination, and one of the things which interested him was the effect of drugs on the mind. Never before had he had the opportunity to try a drug of the sort some people call mind-expanding; and, having read about, and thought about the subject, he had decided that he was willing, and, indeed, desirous of trying one of these drugs should he ever be presented with the opportunity. Therefore, he surprised, and delighted Michelle by simply saying, "Yes, I would like to."

"Bon," she said enthusiastically. "I have tried it many times before, and there is nothing to be afraid of. Have some wine," she said, handing him the bottle to open, "and
pour me some, as well; but don't drink too much: I don't want you to get drunk."

Some time later they were finishing off the remains of thinly sliced roast goat in a coconut and berry sauce. The room was dark except for the light cast by two candles, and, in the background, an oil lamp. They were alone in the house, Michelle having sent Ta'oto home. Michelle asked Howard if he'd like some coffee, and he replied that he would (for he was beginning to like it). While she was getting the coffee, and sweets, Howard reviewed what she'd told him over dinner.

She's told him that under the influence of the drug time is virtually meaningless, seeming to pass only very slowly. She told him that it is a world full of signs and symbols, but while for some people, apparently, the signs are tational, even verbal, for others the signs come so fast, so clearly, and with such certitude that the person believes each of his thoughts to be something inspired, divined, illuminated, or at the most mundane, intuited—and that these signs seem to most people to be the truth, unvarnished by the Ego, and undoubted in its wholeness. To subject the insight to a close, rational scrutiny, Michelle had said, is to dissipate it, to waste it. It follows then, that wise people simply accept what nature, under any circumstances, offers—abandoning
any sort of grasping, or attempts at control. Being very high, she said, afforded a unique opportunity for the individual to see beyond any semantic category, such as "thought", or "reason", and yet at the same time to be very objective, perceiving without judgement. She said that if one were truly high, there was no sense of Ego, but rather just a sense of Being, and just Being was being free, and it was this feeling, she concluded, that people knew as euphoria—hence, the chief attraction of drugs like hashish and opium.

Howard, who had excelled at school by having a mind particularly able to extract the main points of a lecture, digest, and retain them, marked Michelle's commentary well. Being an anthropologist, he knew that many people all over the world have, for a very long time, taken drugs—when they could—or made some kind of fermented drink when they could not—in order to induce special states of consciousness. Not infrequently, taking drugs was tied up with their religious views. While Howard considered himself a Rationalist—that is to say, above the frenzy and/or superstitions of an immature and irresponsible mind—he felt he owed it to himself (in one way or another) to experience, at least once, that state induced by drugs. So it was that that night in French Polynesia, young Dr. Feigenbaum felt a keen sense of anticipation for what was to follow.

Michelle entered the room carrying the coffee and
sweets. She advised him, however, to drink no more than one cup of coffee, saying, "Caffein, being a stimulant, works against what we'll be smoking."

"Maybe we shouldn't drink any coffee," Howard suggested.

"No, it's all right. I've brought in the demitasse cups. One will be quite all right." She served Howard, and then she served herself.

Then she went into the bedroom, and returned this time with a small wooden box—beautifully inlaid, and highly ornamented. She put it down on the table in front of her chair, and then brought over the hookah. Howard watched her as she filled the bottom bowl with wine: water only cooled the smoke, she explained to him, whereas wine gave it a fine taste, as well. Then she told him to come and look at the drug, and how she prepared it.

"You have no qualms about using drugs?" she asked him.

"A little," he admitted.

"But not so much. I confess: I am surprised—but glad." After she took a sip of her coffee, she said, "Then let me tell you something else about what we are going to smoke. I wasn't going to, but your attitude has changed my mind." She paused. "This is not just hashish. This is a very high quality hashish from Bombay which has been cured
in opium. All that this means to you is that you will feel possibly even more than you would have, a sense of dreaminess; in other words—things may seem to you unreal, rather like a dream but at the same time, very clear. Remember that there is nothing to be distressed about . . ."

She had a pocket knife, and she was using it to slice the pliable black substance into pieces the size of cornflakes. Howard watched her silently. "Now, you may become so absorbed in your dream," she went on, "that you'll have no desire to speak with me. If that's the case, fine, don't worry, it's all be right. Most people have little or no desire to talk when they're high—I hope you will learn why . . . I doubt that I will have much to say to you, so please don't feel ignored, or hurt if I don't talk to you much . . ."

She took all the shavings then, and put them into the small bowl at the top. "You must not worry about anything when you are under the influence of drugs," she told him. "There are no rights, Howard, and there are no wrongs . . ." She concluded, "No one will be judging you. You must feel free to do whatever you wish. Do what thou wilt . . . Do you understand?"

Howard nodded that he did.

"Good," she said. "Wait a moment." She went into her bedroom, returning with the two pillows which she put on the floor against the tapa covered wall where, just a few days
before, they had laid back together, and listened to music. "Come on," she told him, "let's be comfortable." And so they sat down on the large pillows.

Michelle struck a match. Four minutes later, each having inhaled the magic smoke deeply perhaps a dozen times, they leaned back against the wall again, together—and alone, far away, and close at hand, heavy, and light, happy, dizzy, and dumb. They were, in a word, high—very, very high.

Howard was lost—but he didn't know it, and he didn't care: he was happy. His body was stretched out in a woman's house on a languorous tropical island, very far from the place where he grew up—in Bloomington, Indiana. His mind was moving, but very slowly, around some uncertain points in what was for him a relatively unknown place: his own inner space. Meanwhile, life continued playing outside the house, completely indifferent to the state of their heads, just as it did five minutes before.

Howard was dazed at first, and happy, and virtually without thoughts. And then the image of Degas' The Absinthe Drinkers crossed his mind. The image, however, did not depress him: there was no judgement attached to it. Again his mind was empty. Then he realized that he was smiling—and that amused him; but his amusement didn't affect his smile at all; he noted that, and that didn't affect his smile, either.
He was beginning to think now, slightly, without his willing it to happen. Then, suddenly, he started: not physically, but in a relaxed, mental way, when he realized that he was hearing or to be more accurate, feeling, organ music—somewhere. After a moment's listening, he realized that there was no tune, and this surprised him, but he could feel the surging vibrations. He forced himself to concentrate on the sound/feeling, and decided it was coming from within him. Then he told himself that it was understandable that it was hard to understand: he was under the influence of a drug. Then he didn't think again for a while. He didn't think of himself, he didn't think of Michelle, he didn't think of the situation. He just lay, mostly horizontal, his upper back, neck and head leaning against the wall. He wasn't comfortable, he wasn't uncomfortable: he was unaware of his body. He was smiling, and a few minutes later he noted that fact again, but did not ask himself why he was smiling, and he lapsed into non-thinking again. Then he thought to himself that it would be better if he didn't try to analyze anything. He heard nothing but the quietly insistant sound that he associated with an organ; he saw nothing, but that was because he chose not to look; he felt nothing, except for a great warmth in the back of his throat, and in the center of his chest.

But in time he began to think. How long it was before he began to think, Howard, himself, could not have told you.
Time seemed suspended—at least where he was. But he began to think. The thoughts came softly and gradually, at first, so soft that indeed, they were more like . . . feelings. But feelings began firming up so that he could put a handle on them and pronounce them—a word!

Suddenly Howard became aware that music was really playing—real music. He opened his eyes, and had them focus. He saw, at the far end of the room, Michelle, dancing. She'd turned on the radio—and she'd changed her clothes. She was wearing a pareau—native style: that is, from slightly below the navel, to slightly below the knees. And that's how she was dressed. She was dancing in the Polynesian manner—a dance style similar to the Hawaiian hula. She seemed unaware of him, Howard observed, and she seemed to dance very well, too.

Howard continued his observation. He was seeing quite clearly now. He believed he could see, and understand much more clearly than he usually could, and the things he knew, he knew. There was no need to analyze, no need to criticize, or judge. For what? Things were as they were, and undoubtedly they'd remain that way—even if the particulars seemed to change. He couldn't control it; no one could. Without much thought he knew that actually, he couldn't even control himself—much less other people, or circumstances. . . . If he could control himself, he'd always see to it that he said the right thing, or did the right thing; but obviously he didn't always say or
do the right thing—therefore, it followed that he couldn't control himself that well. He couldn't even control the way he felt about things. If he could control that, he'd always feel good—no matter what happened. He would, thereby, assure himself a happy life. But he couldn't. Sometimes he just felt sad, or distressed. . . . If he was in control of himself, he wouldn't be reacting like he was right now, would he? First of all, something was happening underneath his shorts that he wasn't in control of. Secondly, here he was watching this middle aged woman dancing, and he was thinking that she was beautiful! That didn't sound like he was even in control of his head. He continued smiling, continued lying motionless, and then he sighed.

He was surprised, watching her dance, to discover a strong feeling of affection for this woman. He had only known her for two and a half weeks, but he already knew her to be highly intelligent, independent, sometimes very warm, and sensitive, and, joke of jokes, wanting to sleep with him! (What that meant, however, he really didn't know.) Why did she want to sleep with him, he wondered. Was she a nymphomania? No, they're extremely rare. Could it possibly be that she liked him? Howard saw the answer clearly and easily. In fact, he knew the answer even before he asked himself the question. She was desirous of sexual enjoyment—just like that!—and she liked him, too. Amazing! The realization
made Howard feel very good—but in a calm way, not in a leap of glee.

He continued watching her lithe body moving with the rhythm of the music, her hips encased in a blue pareau with white flowers on it, swing around gently, but emphatically. She looks very good for a middle aged woman, he thought. Of course, it is not all that light in here . . . Michelle looked at him, then. Their eyes met. He smiled a little (for his smile had been waning as the muscles in his face gradually let go), and she smiled back. Then she began dancing towards him. He watched the shadow change as she moved across the room. And suddenly he realized that he was enjoying the music far more than he did when he first became aware of it. It was essentially rhythm, with a few men singing, calling, and chanting behind it. He wondered what they were singing about. Now Michelle was dancing perhaps twelve feet away from where he was lying—his right foot crossed over his left foot at the ankle, his body extremely relaxed, and comfortable, and heavy. He saw her eyes gazing directly, and softly into his, her head held surprisingly level, as her body moved gracefully with the rhythm. Very authentic, he thought. He was smiling—only partly out of a slight embarrassment to be where he was, with his mentor, Dr. Benoit, naked to the waist now, dancing for him, it seemed. And he kept smiling . . .

It was as she said. There was a certain dreamy
quality to the whole thing—and yet at the same time, every­
thing was clear and sharp in his head. He saw that she was
trying to seduce him—he knew it without doubt—and yet, it
was all right: he realized he liked her. He did wonder
briefly, what she saw in him, but he didn't pursue it. One
of the very interesting aspects of his thinking at the time
was what he did not think. He did not think of the future.
He did not ask himself, "What will happen?" or, "should I do
it? and if so, how?" What he did do was see, and appreciate--
and that's about all. He watched her with considerable inter­
est, and could see that she was feeling the drug, too. He
noted that with charity, and affection. She was just a human
being, just like he was. He looked at her breasts: he had
wanted to see them for some time, now. They weren't too large,
but, he decided, they were large enough, and firm. Most sur­
prising were the nipples: they were large, and brown. That
meant she had had a child, . . . didn't it? And he liked her
wrists, very much, in fact, and her hands. He marvelled at
the fluidity of their movements, and how feminine they seemed.
Now she was using them to beckon him to join her in the dance.
No, he didn't know how to dance this dance. He just didn't
want to anyway. He was too happy where he was, and too com­
fortable—so relaxed that he had no desire to move so much as
a finger. Why upset the incredible contentment he felt. He
wanted to tell her this, nicely, and gently, so she'd under-
stand, but he didn't even want to talk. That would also upset it. Why expend the energy? He continued smiling.

As it turned out, it wasn't necessary to tell her. He could see that she understood, bless her, for she was turning away now, still dancing, and apparently, as far as he could see, she was not distressed over his refusal. Her face still appeared to be happy. That was good. Maybe they'd dance later. Right now, all he wanted to do was continue not moving, and listen to the music, and let his mind go empty whenever it happened.

She's courageous, he thought. Dancing bare breasted. Actually, she's quite a woman. I ought to appreciate her more than I do. But I am. I ought to take advantage of her. Take advantage of her? She wants to take advantage of you! It's really quite a joke.

All right: so she's different than you are. Most people are. Then again, I'm not so sure of that.

It didn't occur to Howard that he was a lot more tolerant towards Michelle now than he had been at first. It didn't occur to him because that was not the case. In fact, he was not being tolerant: rather, he was simply being—without intolerance. He was free now, of his Ego's customary imposition; the myth that almost all of us accept—that we know what is right—not only for ourselves, but for others, as well. Howard was, at this moment, in a state of suspended judge—
ment; a state in which his Ego was powerless to do the judging, because his Ego was pushed aside, forgotten—so fascinated that he was seeing clearly, seeing through, as it were, the Ego's imposition.

After a while he got up to look for Michelle. He was feeling very kindly disposed towards her now, and somehow he wanted to tell, or show her, some sign of affection. She's probably very lonely, he thought. He discovered that he wanted to walk only slowly, but as he walked, he became convinced that he was walking with a new found grace.

He found her outside. Suddenly it was night-time, and suddenly it was outside. Heaven had never seemed so great . . . it was enormous! And the stars, the same stars that were always there, in the words of The Book of Job: all sang together! They were beautiful, and countless, and twinkling . . . He stood there for awhile, and looked at them, and the moon. The air was clear, and carried the scent of frangiapani, hibiscus, and salt water: just breathing was a bit intoxicating!

Michelle was sitting on the beach, apparently watching the surf as it pounded in, withdrew, and then came crashing in again.

As he walked towards her, he was amazed at how bright everything seemed. Never had he known that the moon and stars could cast such light! As he walked towards her, he could feel
the sand giving, and moving beneath his feet, and with every step he heard the sound he'd grown accustomed to by now, and liked—the sound of dogs, barking in the distance; and as he walked towards her, he looked up, and he saw the landscape of a very bright moon, clearly detailed, reflecting the incredible light of the sun.

She didn't turn, even when he was close, and he knew that she had heard him. He sat down right next to her, and then he looked at her, and smiled. He felt calm, but he wondered: how was she? He thought she seemed a bit cold, although he couldn't feel any chill—or any warmth . . . Of course, she wasn't wearing anything on top. She seemed to him smaller than usual. She looked at him, carefully, he thought, and smiled. What was there in that smile? What was there in her face? He didn't know. He only knew he felt tenderly towards her. He put his arm around her. Suddenly he realized that it was her birthday. That's it! She wasn't cold: she was . . . depressed. She was growing older, and here she was on this island, virtually alone . . . except for him, and no one was there with whom she could share memories, and no one had given her a present . . . That would depress anyone . . . That left it up to him . . . He had to comfort her. He wanted to. A kiss would be nice. But where . . . ?

He kissed her on the cheek. That didn't feel right, and so he knew it wasn't. He saw her face, and the strange
expression on it when she turned, and helped him solve the problem: he kissed her this time on the lips. But when he pulled away, he knew that the kiss had been abbreviated, and unsuccessful: he had not communicated what he had meant to; so he kissed her again. This time it was a considerably longer, and much better kiss—he knew that. When they stopped kissing, and pulled away, there was more warmth, and confusion, and understanding than any one or two persons can possibly comprehend. It was the wisdom of their estate, however, not to try to grasp the meaning of what had just transpired, but rather, simply to let it be.

Was this the Howard Feigenbaum who had said only a week before: "What has happened is that many theorists now assume learning to be fundamentally a stochastic or probabilistic affair, and indeed, apart from nonparsimonious theories which would postulate some entelechy at the console of the mind, the stochastic approach is perhaps the only organized theory of the nature of learning."

In a manner of speaking, Yes.

Michelle lay back; Howard, resting on one elbow, wondered what she was thinking, but there was more than that going on in his head. He saw Dr. Benoit on her back, naked to the waist ... and he saw the moon as being very bright, and he felt the waves were crashing with delight. He felt affirmation, and negation; comprehension, and incomprehension.
He had to smile, because he knew that he had been made to go very high by that opium cured hashish, and that, almost certainly, he was imagining things—and yet, he wasn't absolutely certain at this moment, that it was the drug that was making him high. The whole thing seemed magic. Everything did.

His colleague happened to be a woman, who happened to be older than he, who happened to be very intelligent, who happened to be far from home, who happened to be having a birthday this night, who happened to need affection, who happened to want sexual pleasure . . .

He happened to be a man, who happened to be the only man on the island who could speak her language, and who happened to be the only man on the island who might make love to her, who happened however, to be a virgin, who happened to be something of a prude, who happened, however, to feel free of his usual restraints that evening because he had smoked a particularly powerful hashish.

When he looked at it in a certain way, it was all magic, the way it had come down . . . If Howard had thought, "I've got to work with this woman for the next six months; perhaps I'd better not . . ."; or if he had thought, "I shouldn't" it's not right."; or if he'd though, "I'll just sit here on the sand and ignore her" . . . if he had thought, and accepted, any of these things (except, perhaps, the last) the magic would have ceased. But he didn't. He didn't because at this time, Howard
Feigenbaum of Bloomington, Indiana, was in a very real sense, enchanted.

Looking down at Michelle he saw a dreamy smile on her face, and then she looked at him, and then he saw her reach up slowly to touch his jaw, lightly, and go on to explore the side of his face with gentle fingers. Then he bent down and kissed her. They kissed, and they kissed again...

She gave him a short, affectionate kind of kiss, which surprised him, coming as it did after their mounting passion, and pulled away smiling at him as she did so, and stood up. Easily she untied the knot of her pareau, and let it drop to the sand, right next to Howard. Then she ran into the ocean.

Howard hesitated only a moment. He got up, took off his shirt, and then his tennis shoes, and then his trousers, and then his shorts, and ran after her into the pounding surf.

A few minutes later, they were embracing under the bright stars and moon of a night in the South Pacific, wet, but not cold, feeling the undertow pulling at them. At first they simply kissed, and then daringly, Howard felt her breasts. They were wet, and firm, and the nipples stood out hard. Passion caught up with young Dr. Feigenbaum; he was wildly kissing Michelle's eager breasts, when the young man and lady
were hit by a large wave, knocking them down. There they were,
spitting out salt water, laughing, and naked under the stars,
and holding on to one another, trying to get their balance,
as the water began drawing back. Then, standing in relatively
shallow water, the intensity (and length) of Howard's ardor
was revealed. He was suddenly embarrassed, and (himself)
awed, panting, and laughing, and then shocked as Michelle
dropped down to her knees to bestow a passionate kiss to the
head of his blind, but supremely eager and erect sexual organ.
The ecstasy, and shock, caused him to groan out loud, his
hands moving over his face. A long moment later, he realized
that she had stopped, and when he opened his eyes, he saw the
back of her running up onto the beach. As he watched, aston­
ished, he saw her putting on his trousers, and then put on his
shirt, and then stuff his underwear into the pocket of his pants.
Then she ran back down towards him, and as he watched, still
astonished, she put her thumb on her nose, wagged her fingers,
and stuck out her tongue at him! Then she wheeled, and started
running back towards the camp.

He couldn't believe it . . . He stood there, uncon­
scious of the water, of everything, save what had just hap­
pened. He couldn't believe it. He didn't know what to make
of it. She looked like . . . a comedienne in his clothes.
Now she was running away . . . And . . . that face she'd made
at him . . . What did it all mean? . . . He couldn't even
run after her, but he did. Once on the beach, he put on the pareau as best he could.

A few minutes later he was walking through the sand dressed in pareau and tennis shoes. He felt incredibly relaxed, and at the same time, keyed up; he felt good. He was thinking clearly, and he felt he was seeing clearly, too. He felt that what he saw now unfolding was natural. He felt neither giddy with anticipation, nor depressed by his own tradition.

There's no reason, he told himself, to be solemn, either. To be solemn is to acknowledge depression... All right: so you may be going to your sexual Armagedon. She knows what she's doing... I would imagine... Don't even think about it. Just accept whatever comes up. Do whatever she wants to do... After all, it's her birthday... And don't think so much, will you please! You can think tomorrow... All right, I'm almost there. Now how am I to be? Just Be, that's all you have to do. Play it by ear, and accept whatever the situation offers... What if? No! Stop thinking!!!... Of course, it wasn't easy for Howard to stop thinking—even if he told himself to (since, like almost everyone else, he wasn't really in control of his thinking...). And, in any case, the drug was beginning to wear off.

He found Michelle where he'd guessed he'd find her:
under the sheets, in her bedroom. He'd never seen the room before: right now it was illuminated by two flickering candles. The bed was large, and there were a number of framed photographs of people and places she'd known on the walls. He would have liked to examine them, but obviously this wasn't the time for that. He noted the hookah on a night table, beside the bed. When he came in, Michelle patted the bed, indicating her desire that he join her. He did: he sat on it, dressed in his pareau and tennis shoes, one leg crossed over the other, and wondered what he should say or do. Finally, he did the only thing he could think of.

"Happy Birthday," he said, and he bent over to kiss her. After they'd completed the kiss, there was a long pause, during which time there was a considerable amount of eye contact; and then Michelle said, "It's your birthday, too, you know . . . do you realize that?"

He didn't understand for a moment, and then he did. He liked her for knowing, and for saying what she did—but in the back of his mind, he could hear a cocky voice say: "You're being a little premature, aren't you, Michelle?"—and that made him smile. So much was going on!

"What are you smiling at?" she whispered.
"Nothing," he said, still smiling.
"Would you like to smoke a little more?" she asked him.
"Definitely," was his answer.
What followed, that night, was a little smoking, and a lot of making love. Howard was as green as a stem, but he had everything required to do the job—not to mention the harmony inside, i.e., hot blood, warm heart, smoke of Bombay Black, and a cool and empty mind. So with Michelle Benoit there to assist and supplement his instincts with her knowledge, and with the help of the magic smoke to relax him, to sensitize him, and to keep his head up high, young Dr. Feigenbaum was a great, great success.

For the first time he realized ecstasy. And he understood that it was an indivisible experience. A person who has known it, realizes, he realized, that it can't be communicated—at least, not with words . . . That's it. It's that simple . . .

Later, after having made love together for the first time, both of them were under the sheets, looking up at the ceiling, and smiling, Michelle turned to Howard.

"Cherie?"

"Hmm?"

". . . Did you like it?"

He laughed. "Oh, come on, Michelle: you know the answer to that." He shook his head, and put his hand over hers. "Why do you ask?" He was looking directly into her eyes now.

"I just wanted to say hello," she admitted.
He just smiled, and nodded. He looked at her smile, and at her great green eyes, now looking soft. Never before had he felt so pleased with himself as a man—and so solicitous of another person. He felt, in fact... almost as if he loved her!—but fortunately he knew how it really was, and how it really was was fine with him; he was sure it was fine with her, too. Soon they were making love again. The only reality was Here and Now—this beautiful, sweating lady beside him... She was a human being... how had she come here?... He was a human being... how had he come here?...

A few minutes later, Howard inquired of Michelle if she were all right.

"Of course," she smiled. "Why do you ask?"

He paused a moment, and then smiled. "Oh... I guess I just wanted to say hello."

They looked at each other closely, for perhaps the thirtieth time that night—perhaps this time they looked even closer.

"I guess, too," he went on, "I wanted to tell you that it was... well, you know... I can't put a word on it."

They both chuckled. "Anyhow," he said, "I'm going out now; I'm going to sit on the beach for awhile."

"Good, Cherie."
He got out of bed, and put on the pareau. After he got it fastened with a knot, he looked back at Michelle. She'd been watching him. She blew him a kiss. He smiled, shaking his head in happy disbelief, and then, looking at her, he kissed her—at a distance of eight feet away. Then he went out.

Some hours later, dressed only in Michelle's pareau, he sat on the beach, and watched the sun come up. He was exhausted, he was happy, and he knew he knew a good deal more than he did the day before. He listened to the birds chattering, twittering, and calling. He listened to the surf, too, and watched it: it was more gentle now than it had been when he and Michelle were out there. He watched the waves coming in and going out, coming in and going out. He could feel his body's fatigue, and contentment, and knew that it was his. He felt the sand running through his fingers, as he watched the horizon change from very dark, to rosey-grey, on through a delicate purple, yellow-orange, to blue.

All of it seemed to Howard somehow unified, and whole, having come naturally together at this moment, and so completely right as to need no explanation, nor any justification beyond that it simply was. His reaction to all stimuli was the same: he felt all things thought, seen and heard were somehow illuminated; everything seemed flat and clam, and in
some way, suggestive of the Bible. He didn't understand the phenomenon, nor know what was true, and what was false—but neither did he ask. When it crossed his mind that the sun's ascent might actually be the sun's assent, he reprimanded himself gently—in effect, telling himself that words had nothing to do with it.

What does it all mean? . . . It doesn't mean a thing, he told himself. It simply is. And it's beautiful, and you are lucky to be here—that's all. No need to ask why; no need to speculate. It just is, that's all. Enjoy the beauty, enjoy the birds' chattering, enjoy the sand running through your fingers, enjoy it all. Be Here Now.

--The End--