

Dave Margoshes

Lady Of The Lake

Suddenly we were falling. Above us, stars were peeling away into a dark distant eternity like lights blinking out, and on the control board sparks were blossoming like a spray of petals in the breeze. There was a frightful, deafening din as the generators strained to reverse the field and lights flickered, then went out and we were pitched into darkness as we spun down, down. The gravity tubes blew and we went spinning out of our seats, crashing up against the windows. I bumped my head and blacked out for I don't know how long. When I came to, we were already in thick air, I was plastered down against the window and the ship was afire.

"Dear God, save us, save us."

Behind me, I could hear Number Two wailing, almost incoherent, and above that, a keener cry that was, I realized, Number Three screaming a clear pure sound of pain and fright. I wondered why I wasn't crying out, and at that same moment realized that I was: that deep, staccato gulp which rattled in my ears and I'd thought was the engines about to burst, no, that was air firing out of my lungs.

I rolled my head around, with effort and pain, to see eyes bulging huge in Number Two's face, his lips moving: "Dear God, save us, save us." I couldn't see Three, but he was there, he was there.

We hit with a . . . I think the word is *plop*, like a stone in a baker's vat of dough. I thought the sound was that of my own head imploding and I opened my eyes expecting to see my father and mother by my side, smiling welcome and pointing the way to Tsimah's Throne. But instead I saw gray fumes billowing across the window like thick rain and heard a hiss as steamy and satisfying as thrusting a glowing poker into a rain barrel.

"We're in water," I heard myself saying. "We may even be alive." The window let go of me suddenly, like a suction cup losing hold, and I fell free, in a heap, sliding on my back until a thump on my head stopped me. The ship was sinking slowly, with its nose up on an

28. W.B. Yeats, *Essays* (London, 1924), p. 508-9. Ernest Lee Tuveson, *The Imagination as a Means of Grace* (New York, 1974), offers a brief comparison of Alison with Yeats, developing the insights first suggested by Monk, *The Sublime*, p. 155ff.
29. Alison, *Essays*, p. 11.
30. W.B. Yeats, *Essays and Introductions* (London, 1961), p. 90.
31. *Ibid.* p. 89.
32. *Ibid.* p. 35.
33. *Ibid.* p. 156-7.
34. W.B. Yeats, *Uncollected Prose*, I, ed. J.P. Frayne (London, 1970), p. 277.
35. Armstrong, *Victorian Scrutinies*, p. 89. Hallam's essay was first published in *The Englishman's Magazine*, i (1831).
36. See Thomas Crawford, *The Edinburgh Review and the Romantic Poets (1802-1829)* (Auckland, 1955), p. 5, which argues that Hallam's essay is, apart from Jeffrey's review of Alison, the major aesthetic statement of the *Edinburgh Review's* early years.
37. *The Remains in Verse and Prose of Arthur Henry Hallam* (London, 1863), p. 162. This collection was published privately after Hallam's death and all of the philosophical essays are deeply indebted to associationism; see for instance the essay 'On Sympathy', in which he writes that he does 'not imagine any original principle distinct from association is necessary to account for this fact.' (104).
38. Armstrong, *Victorian Scrutinies*, p. 93.
39. W.B. Yeats, *Essays and Introductions*, p. 215-6.
40. This line of development is more often assumed than proved and probably begins with Edmund Wilson's *Axel's Castle* in 1931; it has also been examined by Ruth Z. Temple, *The Critic's Alchemy* (New York, 1953) and Enid Starkie, *From Gautier to Eliot* (London, 1961).
41. Arthur Symonds, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (London, 1899), p. 133-4.
42. *Ibid.* p. 134.
43. Ezra Pound's essay was published in *The Fortnightly Review*, September 1914 and is quoted in Peter Jones, *Imagist Poetry* (Harmondsworth, 1972), p. 21. Pound's definitions of the 'image' owe much to Yeats's definitions of the symbol. Donald Davie in *Ezra Pound: Poet as Sculptor* (London, 1965), notes that Pound should be regarded as harking back to pre-symbolist and even pre-romantic convictions, but would probably still not have accepted Ivor Wynters' contention, which I hope I have justified, that Pound 'adopted the inversion derived from Locke by the associationists 'of senses and ideas (*The Function of Criticism* (London, 1962), p. 47).
44. Ezra Pound, *The New Age*, XVI (28 January, 1915), p. 349; quoted in Jones, *Imagist Poetry*, p. 40.
45. See Garnet Rees, *Remy de Gourmont* (Paris, 1940), particularly p. 157 ff.
46. Eliot's theory is first adumbrated in his essay 'The Metaphysical Poets' of 1921.
47. T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London, 1951), p. 282.
48. *Ibid.* p. 283.
49. T.S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* (London, 1957), p. 32-3.
50. T.S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood* (London, 1960; originally published 1920), p. 7.
51. Bradley had opposed the associationists' fragmentation of the mind's activities and Eliot actually quotes a passage from Bradley's attack in his essay on Bradley, *Selected Essays*, p. 446.
52. Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text', in Josue V. Harari, *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism* (London, 1980), p. 76-7.
53. *Ibid.* p. 77.

6. See Arthur Beatty, *William Wordsworth: his doctrine and art in their historical relations* (Madison, 1927) and W.P. Albrecht, 'Archibald Alison and the Sublime Pleasures of Tragedy' in W.P. Elledge and R.L. Hoffman (ed.), *Romantic and Victorian: Studies in memory of William H. Marshall* (Madison, 1971).
7. Francis Jeffrey, 'Alison on Taste', *Edinburgh Review*, XXXV (May 1811); references to Alison's work are to the edition of 1811. A full list of dates and places of publication of the *Essays* can be found in Kallich, p. 249.
8. Jeffrey, *Edinburgh Review* XXXV, p. 3.
9. Alison, *Essays*, p. xi: 'The perception of these qualities is attended with an Emotion of Pleasure, very distinguishable from every other pleasure of our Nature, and which is accordingly distinguished by the name of the Emotion of Taste'; this preliminary statement, which accepts the eighteenth century consensus, is modified later in the argument: 'Wherever the Emotions of Sublimity or Beauty are felt. I believe it will be found, that some affection is uniformly excited, by the presence of the object, before the more complex Emotion of Beauty is felt; and that if no such affection is excited, no Emotion of Beauty or Sublimity is produced' (p. 81); some of the affections which are to be found as constituents in the emotion of taste Alison lists as, 'Cheerfulness, Tenderness, Melancholy, Solemnity, Elevation, Terror', and, he insists, 'there is no case . . . where the Emotions of Taste are felt, without the previous production of some such Simple Emotion.' (83)
10. *Essays*, p. 21: 'In such trains of imagery, no labour of thought, or habits of attention are required; they rise spontaneously in the mind, upon the prospect of any object to which they bear the slightest resemblance, and they lead it almost insensibly along, in a kind of bewitching reverie, through all its store of pleasing or interesting conceptions.'
11. *Essays*, p. 65: Alison describes the experience of beauty is increased by increasing, through the reading of poetry, our stock of potential associations: 'The beautiful forms of ancient mythology, with which the fancy of poets peopled every element, are now ready to appear to their minds, upon the prospect of every scene. The descriptions of ancient authors, so long admired, and so deserving of admiration, occur to them at every moment . . . with such images in their minds, it is not common nature that appears to surround them. It is nature embellished and made sacred by the memory of Theocritus and Virgil, and Milton and Tasso.' The relationship between art and nature works, for Alison, in both directions: the associations of nature are stimulated by art, and those of art by nature. There is no real distinction between the nature of beauty in them because beauty resides entirely in the associative process itself, and it is only the quantity of associations we hold that can intensify our experience: 'the more that our ideas are increased, or our conceptions extended upon any subject, the greater the number of associations we connect with it, the stronger is the emotion of sublimity or beauty we receive from it.' (p. 37)
12. *Essays*, p. 10.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Alexander Bain, *James Mill: A Biography* (London, 1882), p. 167.
15. Carlyle obviously liked this description, he used the phrase several times; see Frederick William Roe, *Thomas Carlyle as a Critic of Literature* (New York, 1910), p. 63n.
16. Thomas Carlyle, *Works* (London, 1896), vol. XXV, *The Life of Schiller*, p. 78.
17. John Stuart Mill, *Dissertations and Discussions*, I (London, 1859), p. 80.
18. See James Mill, *The Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* (London, 1869), p. 90, for the original discussion; see J.S. Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (London, 1867), p. 343n. for an instance of the significance Mill attached to this analogy.
19. John Stuart Mill, *Collected Works*, VIII (London, 1974), p. 853.
20. 'Thoughts on Poetry and its Varieties', *Dissertations and Discussions*, I, p. 82.
21. John Stuart Mill, *Dissertations and Discussions*, III (London, 1875), p. 135.
22. *Ibid.* For a discussion of this debate see George P. Landow, *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin* (Princeton, 1971), p. 100ff. Monk, *The Sublime*, p. 156, comments that 'it was not until Ruskin appeared that Alison's star began to be dimmed.'
23. John Stuart Mill, *The Later Letters, 1849-1873. Collected Works*, XV (London, 1972), p. 645.
24. *Ibid.* p. 935.
25. W.B. Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London, 1952), p. 167.
26. Walter Pater, *The Renaissance* (London, 1961; originally published 1873), p. 220.
27. See Olivier Brunet, *Philosophie et Esthétique chez David Hume* (Paris, 1965).

angle, its engines silent, its lights off, its noise evaporated, all life fled like a flock of birds after a shot. Except for me, and perhaps . . .

"Number Two," I called. No answer.

"Three." A thin, shimmering whisper of sound, like air plunging through a wound, then a gurgle, then silence.

And me? Am I alive or is this that life after death they taught us about? Is this Tsimah's Throne I've banged my head against?

* * *

March 6, 1928

I have much to explain.

I am Number One, Flight 4756. I am in command here, at the bottom of what appears to be a sea. Much of our sensing devices are malfunctioning or simply broken and we have not been able to properly determine the nature of our environment. We do know, though, from a quick study of our charts, that we are on a planet identified on our charts as Rhimphle, inhabited by a large variety of living things compatible to our chemical structure, chiefly a communicating species which calls itself *human* and calls this planet *Earth*.

There were three of us; two survived. Despite his prayers, Number Two's neck was broken, probably in the seemingly harmless *plop* of our plummet into the water, perhaps in the rattling *thud* of our eventual landing on the bottom of this deep, silty sea. He was a friend, a classmate at the academy, a shipmate on three voyages, none as unhappy as this, and I shall miss him.

I am at a disadvantage. I was in command, I *am* in command, and yet I do not actually know what happened to my ship. Whatever it was, it occurred during my sleep period; Number Two was at the controls, Three was beside him. A great whine in the engines and a jolt that shook me out of my bed like a bar of soap from a slippery hand woke me and sent me forward, but we were already falling by then and there was no time for explanations. Number Two can tell me nothing, and Three, I'm afraid, is in no condition to be of any more help. I'm not expert enough in the medical sciences to know what has happened to him except to guess that he has gone mad, whether from fright or some physical cause I don't know. He is speechless—*soundless*, in fact, except for a thin, high-pitched keening noise that erupts from his nose at unexpected times, when he gets agi-

tated—and there is a cloud in his eyes that I've seen before on the faces of survivors of deep space storms. I've done all I can to make him comfortable, for the time being.

I haven't yet had a chance to assess our situation; the crash landing was only yesterday, according to the ship clock (one of the few instruments still working) but I have been seized by a peculiar, floating sense of time, or rather a betrayal of time, caused, no doubt, by the shock of what's happened. My senses, in addition, are being bombarded, almost constantly, by a whole array of fresh stimuli, and it appears that I can pick up thought waves from the humans who live hereabouts, although I have yet to make any sense of what I've been picking up. No, that's not quite correct. I've determined to keep a log of our visit here (and I trust it is to be just a *visit*), as is called for in the pilot's manual, and I've dated this page with what I gather is the Rhimphle date—that's one of the few sensory receptions I've had that I have been able to understand. What the word or the numbers stand for is something I'll have to figure out.

But, there's no rush. I believe I must be getting adjusted to the reality of what has happened because I can even make a joke: there's no rush, because we're not going anywhere.

* * *

Aug. 17, 1934

We've been up to the top again, testing the engines, Three whistling with frenzied glee, setting off another storm among the humans.

I shouldn't do it, I suppose, because some foolhardy ones of them might get it into their heads to come after this "monster" they whisper of and try to capture it. Of all the creatures in deep and shallow space I've observed or heard of, these humans are the most volatile, always ready to fight—not for home or family or life, but for a peculiar, vague mythology they've fabricated called honour. Brush against a man's honour and he's as likely to slit your throat as ask you to apologize. I must admit I don't fully understand it. That or a thousand other things "human".

The testing must be done, though, and Three must be amused from time to time or he becomes too morose to live with. His condition has been stable for some years now—he is healthy, happy, speechless, with the mind of a child. I find him a great help, a comfort. Alone, I probably would have gone as mad as he is a long while ago.

I must apologize: I said “years” above. I had thought the ship’s clock had survived the crash, and I believe, in fact, that it had. But it’s long since ceased to work—the atmosphere here is responsible probably. And, despite a lifetime, the inner clock our theoreticians speak of so fondly is not as reliable or sturdy as the incessant blurts upon my senses. All *feeling* for our own calculations and concepts of time have long since dissolved in favor of the Earthly way. It’s a peculiar, arbitrary calendar: the words are names of months, of which there are 12 in a year; the first set of digits is the day of the month—there are 30 of those divisands in most of the months, though there are exceptions; and the second set is what they call the year—in fact, it’s the number of years (or sets of 12 months) since the birth of a charming fictional character who performs the same sort of role that Dharlingh did in the epics we used to study in school. It’s an interesting story and I’ve been making notes, with hopes of doing a paper on it for the university. The days (these Earth days) are long and uneventful at the bottom of the loch, with little to do but study the strange ways of our “hosts”.

We have achieved major repairs to the ship, and I’m satisfied that we’re keeping up with the schedule I set out for us. We are able to move quite freely within the loch, and thus constantly test parts and instruments as I get them back into running shape. Flying is out of the question, and will be for some time to come, but I’m more convinced than ever that we will, eventually, be able to leave this place and return home.

It’s this hope that keeps Three going.

He’s really quite pathetic, I suppose, although I try not to think of him that way. To me, he’s almost like a pet: trusting, vulnerable, always there, frequently under foot, always loving.

There isn’t much to read aboard the ship—we were a short range reconnaissance craft, remember, not a deep space expeditionary vessel—and what little there is I recycle. It’s essential to keep contact with our own language, and since Three is no conversationalist, reading is the only link I have—that and the sound of my own voice, which is becoming more common all the time, I’m afraid. I was reading from Three’s records only recently, just for something to read, and was struck again by the tremendous loss.

“Do you realize, Three, that you were the youngest pilot ever to graduate from the academy?”

We are sitting in the lounge, which is as comfortable as ever, I in the long chair, Three sprawled out on the floor. He looks up at me, as

he always does when I speak. His swollen head is at a tilt, his glazed eyes wobbling, and there is a thread of spittle on his lips. He makes the low, grating rumble of contentment.

"You were particularly brilliant in navigation, it says here, and I can vouch for that." I raise the rolled map and shake it in his direction; he beams with pleasure, the rumble beginning to climb its fixed scale which peaks with the shimmering whine of excitement. This is a game he knows.

I spread the map out on the floor and he scrambles over. I've drawn the map on the back of one of our charts; it was fairly easy to filter the details for it out of the barrage of information which my senses pick up constantly from the human transmitters who live all around these parts. And it's these parts which I've mapped here: a large area of several islands in a quite large sea at the edge of an even larger land mass—the latter is called Europe and is equivalent in size to Thrisht; the former, the islands, are called the British Isles. At the northern end of the largest of these islands (about as big as Danthk) is a country called Scotland. The political connections between these various areas are so complicated as to stagger any casual student, and I'll not trouble myself to record them here.

Now we come closer to home.

"See, here, this is Scotland," I point to the map. "Now, Three, find me . . . Inverness-shire."

He whines—I know it's really a squeal of delight, not a complaint—and jabs a trembly finger in the appropriate direction. This Inverness-shire is a subdivision of the Scotland country, a desolate, rural area, filled with high mountains, treacherous coastline, fog, humans with sour dispositions and odd looking, woolly creatures the humans raise for food and their coats, called sheep.

"Good, good, now . . . the Great Glen."

Another squeal, the finger wagging into place. It's hard to believe he's fully grown, fully developed, a graduate, a contributor, yet here he is, his bulky shape casting a shadow over the map, his strength still with him. This Great Glen is a long trough-like depression that splits this Scotland on an angle like a knife slash. A long series of canals follows its scar, and our loch is part of the system.

"Sheeeee, sheeeeeee." Three is ecstatic as he points out to me the mark on the map that stands for here and now.

"Yes, that's our loch, that's home."

He raises his head, a faint spark chipping through the haze that slicks his eyes. "Sheeeee." The pitch rises to a height at which it becomes uncomfortable to hear. His body wobbles.

"Home. Not our real home, but the place where we live." I realize that my own voice is unusually loud, as if to break through the wall of sound he erects between us, and I lower it. "Don't you worry, Three, I'll get you home, to your real home."

He flops down on the floor again, his shoulders massive in their curl over the map. In truth, he makes no sense of what he sees, I'm sure—the map might as well be of the most distant galaxy—but takes comfort in the familiarity of certain squiggles. I wish I could be as certain as I pretend to be. I find myself standing by the window, hands clasped behind my back in a gesture I've picked up from the humans I've seen, staring out into the dark, almost unmoving water. There are creatures living here, creatures of apparently low mentality for I receive no sensory vibrations from them. I've seen many different varieties on the occasions we've lifted the ship and spun to the surface; few of them come this deep, though, where the pressure must be unbearable, and there is almost complete darkness. One brushes by the window now: a plump, blind looking thing that gives off a faint glow. It hangs suspended at the window, a live thing with puffed lips touching a dead thing in which living things live.

"Do you know, fish, that our ship is of your kind? That's what the people are saying. Have you heard them? No? We are the last vestige of a once great race of monsters, a long way from home."

I tap on the window. This fish is blind I believe, but the sound scares him away.

* * *

Jan. 12, 1957

We have a name now—they call us Nessie.

I have to admit, too, that we've been taking too many chances. There is a certain fascination for me in playing this game they thrust on us. I've completely mastered the language schemata, down to the subtlest of nuance, and perfected a technique of my own in which I can tune in to certain wave lengths at my own choosing. The result is that, instead of being constantly bombarded by indiscriminate sensory impulses, I can pick and choose what I want to receive. It's not unlike sitting at a telereceiver console, flipping through the channels, selecting the one you want. And the channel I find myself selecting more and more often is the one in which a childlike little drama is being played, a drama in which I—we, that is, this ship and its inhabitants—are chief among the players.

Since we are stuck here anyway, for some time more, and since it appears to do no harm, it is hard to turn one's back on the game.

Still, it can be just a bit dangerous.

We were topside this morning, testing the newly repaired control systems. We rose slowly, the engines silent, drifting up through the melting shades of green. There is a sun that shines down on this planet, keeping it warm much of the time, though it is obscured by fog over our loch more often than not. Today, the sun was there and Three begged me to let the ship surface so he could feel the warmth on his skin. We do get starved for light and I could see no harm in it, so I brought her up. Usually, we do this at night.

We broke water at the north end of the loch, the spray splashing against our windows like a burst of rain. The sun beat down brilliantly and white, and soft-looking winged creatures the humans call birds flew about us, calling to each other with sharp, brittle cries that Three began to answer, in his own way. I opened the vents and began to pump in oxygen, which this planet's atmosphere is rich in and our converters can make use of. We lay low in the water, like a sunken log, with the hatches open, and it was quite pleasant, even with our helmets on, to feel the warmth of the sun. I was vaguely conscious of a babbling of voices, nothing I could quite make out, when suddenly I realized that this was not perceptions I was receiving, I was actually *hearing* something.

I pulled myself through the hatch and gazed around us. About half a mile (three quibetres) away, two humans were standing in a small boat, their faces wide and blank, pointing at us and chattering incoherently.

For a long moment, a breath of time, I hung there in the hatchway, braced on stiff arms, my feet dangling, staring at the two men. I could hear their voices, babbling on about the monster, just above the range of my consciousness, and I could see their eyes, the whites vivid and startling against the leathery brown of their skin. The older of the two had a broad, crooked nose and a mouth that seemed to be made of rubber. The younger one had a long, pointed nose, and a long, pointed chin. I stared at them, although I don't think they saw me, and as I hung there, suspended in time, I felt as if I were bound to these men somehow, as if tied to them by a wire which held me firmly in place. It was as if a part of my body opened up and took in a part of them; as if their bodies opened and I went inside them; as if we were one. Then I heard Three's skree and I whirled around, dropping back down into the ship, breaking free. He was at the window, pointing out

at the men in the boat, who were starting to row toward us now, the older man rowing, the younger standing in the prow of the boat shaking his arms. The high keening whine steamed out of Three's nose like a steady blast of steam and he banged his head against the window. I spun him around to steady him and stumbled back, alarmed by his face. His eyes were wide, vacant, his mouth gaping; I hadn't realized until that moment how much he had come to look like a human.

For the first time since we've been here, I passed a moment of real fright.

Then it went, just as quickly. I blinked my eyes and Three was Three again, just himself and nothing more, his face only that of a child. I laughed at myself and Three, poor frightened Three, began to laugh too.

Over his shoulder I could see the small boat drawing closer and I called to him to close the hatches. He went for his and I slammed down the one closest, then I raced to the controls. We dove abruptly and without a sound, leaving the men in the boat to curse us, and themselves for being slow. Under, I could no longer hear their voices, but their thoughts came to me with more clarity, this thought strongest among them: we were no myth, this monster of the loch we are, *we are real*.

* * *

Oct. 23, 1965

Three died yesterday and I have felt more pain than I thought could be.

What he died of, I cannot say. For several years, he has been ailing, and there hasn't been anything I could do for him.

For the last few days, he never stirred from the cabin area, too weak to move or be moved. I knew the end was coming for him, yet when he ceased to live I felt as if I had been struck in the face. The earth people have something called tears, a glandular secretion which oozes from the eyes at moments of grief and appears to have a soothing effect. I would gladly have a bodily function as primitive as that today.

Just at the last moment, at the moment that the door opened for him and Tsimah's Throne must have cast its light on him, the fog which veiled his eyes cleared and he looked at me with a knowledge I

have never seen before. He opened his mouth and, had he been able to, I believe he would have spoken.

* * *

Feb. 5, 1972

The ship is almost ready. I've been working on the repairs incessantly, though with what I must admit is somewhat cooled ardor. Since Three's death, the thread which links me and everything which one usually thinks of as reasons to live has grown progressively thinner. This blasted time disorientation is partially to blame, I believe. I can no longer fully conceptualize my own sense of time, so ingrained has the earth clock become for me. It's been several years since Three died, and a year is a long time in this place, at the bottom of a saltless sea, alone. At home, the time which has actually elapsed between that point and this would be relatively short. But this is here, not there.

Loneliness is all pervasive. I find myself talking to Three quite frequently, and this doesn't really trouble me. We were together, alone, for a long time and habits die hard. It's not like, after all, I *really* talk to him, or expect an answer. It's passing, trivial stuff: "Three, what shall we have for breakfast this morning?" or "Hand me this or that, won't you please, Three" or "Well Three, that takes care of that tricky bit of wiring, and now we're one step closer to home."

Home. My memories grow dimmer every day. Faces blur, words spin around on my tongue without meaning, sequences of events break down, like a moving belt snapping, one broken end flapping around its spindle with noise but no purpose. If only there were a way to shut out these senses of Earth—I can narrow the field, I can select (and I've managed to acquire quite a complete education this way) but I cannot turn off the receiver entirely. Always, spinning through my head, right behind the surface of my eyes, is a constant drama, a steady line of sound and meaning. And, always, chief of the players in that drama are the hunters, those who seek me.

They're so blind, these "scientists," these adventurers. The latter group holds my interest and respect higher, since they at least keep their minds open to the multitude of possibilities. *I am not a prehistoric lizard*, confound it. There is one theory that I like especially: that I am a god, the last of an ancient race which once populated these parts and eventually gave way to the persistently ex-

panding race of men. It's delicious to think of myself that way, a lordly survivor of a once regal race, sulking alone far beneath the peering eyes of the puny inheritors. But the logic is flawed—why would a race of gods give way to creatures as pathetic as men? Unless, of course, we were dying anyway, and I, somehow, managed to escape, find refuge here, among the sunken treasures and blind fish.

None of this really concerns me, of course. It's an amusing diversion as I count off the time until I can finally leave this cursed place and return to my own. The ship is almost ready, there's just a bit more work to be done on the wiring. Come, Three, let's be back to work. Soon, we'll be on our way home.



July 2, 1982

They're closing in around me. Somehow, I've miscalculated. I've let things go too long, stayed too long, allowed myself to be mesmerized by the game, and now it's almost too late. They swarm around the loch like insects; soon, they'll swarm around the ship like small fish with sharp teeth, tearing at our metal flesh.

I'm sitting in the control room, in the command seat, my suit and helmet on, my hands resting softly on the control panel. My eyes are closed and I'm watching the last act of this long drama roll out above me. I nod my head. I feel no fear. When the moment comes, when they get too close, I'll push the switch. The engines will roar, the turbines will begin to hum. The ship will vibrate with strength and the puny men will be forced back by the tidal wave which will split the loch as we rise through it, break through the surface and soar above, piercing the sky.

I've been so engrossed in the hunt that I didn't pay attention to how close it was actually coming. It used to be, in the old days, that people would see us on chance when we came to the surface for a test or to take on oxygen or to see the sun. Someone would see us, there'd be a lot of talk and there'd be a flurry of activity up top, boats crossing the loch like furious beetles, long lines with heavy sinkers trailing from them like spider webs. Then, when nothing was found, they'd lose interest and the hunt would wane until the next time we came topside and someone would see and the cycle would begin again. We took delight—Three and I, then I alone—in playing with them, letting them catch just a glimpse, teasing them. It helped pass the time. But

now, in recent years, the pace has quickened. They come looking for us, in specially built ships that probe deep into the loch, with cameras and sound and heat sensing devices. There have been a number of times when I've been forced to take defensive manoeuvres, silently moving the ship, playing the part of the quarry. It's been easy enough eluding them, up to now.

Now, though, they seem to sense that the kill is near.

That's a poor word, I know. These aren't *that* kind of hunter, they're pushed on by a profound, compelling sense of curiosity, not blood thirst. I know that. I know *them*. They mean me no harm, but, of course, they don't really know about *me*. It's my shell they're after, this lady of the lake I live in. But when they find this lady is no living thing, what then? Will they slice her open, will they rape her the way they would one of their own women, boring into her in hopes of finding something inside they couldn't find on the outside?

Well, no matter. When the time comes, I'll push the switch, I'll be long gone. There's no danger, really. I am, after all, who I am, and they are merely they.

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July 3, 1982

The moment has come. They swarm around the ship like firebugs around a lantern. Their tiny ship lies next to us, and men emerge in diving gear, with torches in their hands, pipes that blow fire even through water. They have probed us, banged us with hammers, scraped at us and taken samples away for testing. They've peered in the dark windows while I sat impassive at the controls, out of their sight, watching their thoughts. Now, they would tear open our belly to see inside.

My hand is on the switch and I tremble. The moment is now, the moment of flight, the moment of capture. I can soar free, I can take my battered lady home, or I can stay and finish out the game. There is something delicious, after all this time, in the thought, don't you think so, Three? Sit by me, let me take your hand, Three, don't be frightened. They mean us no harm these humans. They will rape our lady, slit open her belly with their fire knives, but she will feel no pain. And then they will wiggle in, grope their way through the darkness, feel their way around decades of clutter and confront us, the thread drawing tighter, bringing us closer and closer, face to face. Imagine, Three, the look on their faces as they stand before us, the eggs in the belly of their prehistoric fish. The last vestige of a once great race of monsters, a long way from home.