

reasonably exact, and the beam of matter automatically gravitates to the right person if he is somewhere near.

'So,' said the General, 'on Almeda'—that's the main planet of the Centaurian system—'there is a big scientist named Gonan Ranoth whom we think should be eliminated; and at this moment, on his way to see Gonan, is an official known as Ras Almon. In one hour precisely we will be switching your brain into his body and *vice versa*. Seated next to you in the space liner will be your contact, and you will identify yourself by saying "I wonder if Earthlight looks like that" while looking out of the window, in Almedan of course. He will give you your instructions from then on. When you have done the job you will escape into space if possible, radio your spatial co-ordinates to us and we will switch brains again, bringing you back here and leaving Ras Almon to face the music back on Almeda. Well, that's it.'

That was it all right. Just as simple as that. I was put in a small room on board a space ship and given all comforts while being whisked up into space. This was to be Ras Almon's prison while I was doing my job in his body. I could see the sense in these operations easily enough. A few assassinations like this one, with the Centaurians getting the blame for it, and there would soon be utter confusion behind the enemy lines with nobody willing to trust his neighbour, and everyone constantly wondering who was going to go berserk next. When it came to the time all I had to do was sit at the table and the machine overhead would do the rest. The experiment worked perfectly. I seemed to go a bit dizzy, and when that had passed I was strapped in a seat and inside a purple-coloured body. It was a good job that the passenger seated next to me was an Earth sympathizer or I would never have got over that initial hour or so while I became used to working a body which was unfamiliar to me.

I had no trouble passing the guards or check points. After all, everything was Ras Almon's but for the brain, and I was confident that I could pass any test they cared to make on me with flying colours. Apart from that, I was supposed to be visiting Gonna on business anyway, so that it was almost absurdly easy getting to see him.

Killing Ranoth was very easy. There were a few anxious moments during the escape but I made it all right. There was a car waiting outside from which another car took me to a one-man space craft. So here I am, out in space with half the Centaurian space navy closing in around me. I have radioed my course back to the Earth ship, and am now waiting for the transference back to my own body. This one is older and fatter and not in very good condition. I don't envy Ras Almon having to face this little lot outside. I'll bet they make it hot for him.

Why don't they switch? There's an alien cruiser alongside signalling me to stop. If they don't transfer now my co-ordinates will alter. Ah, there it is—I'm going dizzy again. I'm back in my own body now—I know it instinctively. Funny, I still feel a bit dizzy. The feeling should have passed now. I'm lying with my head on the table in front of me, and I don't seem to be able to summon the strength to lift it.

I can feel something wet against my face. I force open my eyes. It's red and sticky. My hand is in front of my face. Oh, my God! There's a long ugly gash across the wrist. Blood is pouring out. That's what the sticky liquid is and why I can't find any strength. I am bleeding to death. That crafty alien bastard. Curse him. The scientists will be coming in a moment or two to see if the transference took all right. They will be too late. Already everything is going dark . . . there is only blackness now . . . oblivion. . . .

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#### FROM A READER'S LETTER

'MAY I say . . . how much I value your books. I have been an sf fan for a number of years and I can say that you have never sent me a dull one. . . . I hear that *Best SF 4* is a great anthology and I am looking forward to reading it.' · J. K. · Gibraltar.

#### CAN ANYONE HELP?

If any member would like to sell his copy of *Galactic Cluster*, by James Blish, will he please contact Mr Francis Pike, Faber & Faber, 24 Russell Square, London, W.C.1 (Museum 9543).

THIS MONTH'S CHOICE IS  
**ALIENS FOR NEIGHBOURS**  
by Clifford Simak

(Faber 15s; SFBC 5s 9d)

NEXT MONTH'S CHOICE IS  
**SPECTRUM** Edited by Kingsley Amis  
and Robert Conquest

(Gollancz 18s; SFBC 5s 9d)