

After about ten minutes he was within a mile of it. He made it out to be a wall of some sort—a shining, luminous white wall. He slowed down the scout-car, checked his landing procedure faithfully, stopped his engine and, after putting on his lunar suit, stepped out through the airlock. He took with him his specimen cases and surveying instruments and went to within two hundred yards of the 'wall'. He thought then that he should stop and take some readings, but when he tried to stop he found that he could no longer control his legs. They were being moved by some strange power. He could not turn back from the wall, and as he came to within feet of it he felt an immense love for God within him. He touched it and it dissolved. He found himself in a cavern, blue, cold steel surrounding him. From the walls came intangible geometric shapes of creation and death . . . silent machinery was carrying out its function purposefully, after lying in disuse for millennia. After a while it seemed as if these shapes returned to a centre within the man's mind. A voice boomed out and it was within him too.

As he listened he was overcome with grief. He wept with a feeling of utmost compassion. The voice told him of the mistake that had been made in creating life on earth, of the unwillingness of the deity to receive kindness and love from a world in which life was merely an accident. It spoke of a harsh god, whose only aim was to absorb man's life into its own gruesome nature.

The voice went on. At last the man could bear it no longer. He tried to move and his limbs obeyed him. The wall had risen up again and he walked through it, back to the scout-car. Once inside he let out all the air in the compartment and took off his lunar clothing. All his faith had gone. Life held no further purpose. The growth of the new idea in his mind obsessed him. He knew that it was forcing him to kill himself.

As his strength ebbed away the geologist felt an impulse to look for the last time at the wall. At this last moment of his life he felt something alien crumble within his mind, and at that same instant the wall itself disintegrated. The man knew an intense feeling of relief. The truth would never be discovered; the dreadful secret which he knew would be safe for ever.

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#### FOR SALE

Mr Arthur Howe has a number of past SFBC titles which he would like to sell. Will interested members please get into touch with him—his address is 84 Ladas Drive, Tregagh, Belfast 6.

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#### OPTIONAL BOOKS

This is a reminder for you about the February extra title, 'Eight Keys to Eden' by Mark Clifton. It is an exceptional piece of sf writing, outstanding for the originality and the excitement of its theme in a form where these qualities have come to be expected. 'The super-hero is an E (for Extrapolator) . . . product of a future society, trouble-shooting above and beyond the law, who successfully, spectacularly and a little luckily . . . completes his first solo mission solving the disappearance of a settlement on Ceti II. The plot has everything from faster-than-light travel to psionics, McCarthy-like opposition to E privileges and aeons-old crystalline intelligences . . . it is extremely readable and that baited hook is in . . .' *New Worlds Science Fiction*. Make sure to place your order for *Eight Keys to Eden* soon; there is a special order form at the end of this *News*. (Incidentally this book may be obtained free if you introduce a new member into SFBC.)

We hope to bring out Optional titles more regularly in future, but we cannot do this unless we are sure first of a definite market. It would help us considerably to assess this if members would fill in the entry for standing orders on the order form. Please be sure that this will *not* commit you to buying every Optional book—you can cancel any standing order if you give us two months' notice—it will simply help us to know how many members are likely to want these extra titles.

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by **Frederik Pohl**

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by **Algis Budrys**

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