

Forster pursed his lips again, and looked as if he knew the answer to the whole business—just like that, and you could almost believe that he did too. I felt like shaking the poor idiot up a bit.

'You don't believe me?' I said quietly.

He shrugged. 'It's not that, Mr Renell. Of course I believe you, and I think I can help'—(how many times have I heard that before! Who's writing his script for him?)—'but I'll need your complete co-operation.'

I got up. 'I'm afraid it's quite obvious that you *can't* help. I shall have to go somewhere else.'

His eyes widened, enormous behind those spectacles. 'Mr Renell, I——'

'No, my mind is made up.' I picked up the stiletto paper-knife from his desk. 'Auf wiedersehen!' I said, and plunged the knife into my chest.

'Mr Renell!' Forster's eyes nearly came out of his head. I would have laughed if it hadn't hurt so much.

The floor lurched.

I fell.

And landed.

And bounced.

I'm immortal, you see.

I'm in hospital now—quite a good hospital too: soft beds, reasonable food and that little nurse, Freda. Forster's giving me treatment, whatever that may mean—all about this falling dream of mine. Well, he can forget about it.

The dream has stopped. I fell down the stairs yesterday and there was no dream. I'm lucky to be alive.

I get the other dream now, about this creature that comes to me from the aliens. It tells me that unless I do as I'm told I'll have to pay all my debts to death. But there are others like me—thousands, millions—and one day we're all going to rise up and create a new world order.

Funny, isn't it?

I'm not immortal, I'm mad.

I think . . .

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## The Way to the Wall

A Note about the CF Choice for January

### The Barbary Light

by P. H. Newby

WHEN Owen Hanner was a boy he tried to run away to North Africa, and his journey ended in the Cardiff docks. Forty years later he still dreams the dream of romantic rebellion, still longs to assert himself as a person. He is an accountant, responsible for investigating the affairs of companies on the verge of bankruptcy, and his revolt against the pattern of his life involves him in two kinds of trouble—the one domestic and the other professional. He takes a mistress, whom his wife befriends and brings home to live with them, involving Hanner in a *ménage à trois* which he did not want and cannot handle. He embezzles a part of the funds of the Silent Bottling Company and finds himself outwitted by cleverer, stronger men. He escapes for a while to Tunisia, just as he had longed to do as a boy, but it is too late: he cannot make his dreams into reality and he lacks the courage to accept and use his own limitations: he comes home to settle down into his weakness and in the generosity of his wife.

'Commuting between London and Henley, the accountant [Hanner] reaches a point in his life when he must, like other men, cut a dash. He tries his hand at playing off wife against mistress, and they combine to defeat him. He attempts a slick underhand deal, but he lacks the hard sense and the conviction to carry it through; real men step in and send him packing. Even his escape to freedom abroad—with Mr Newby at his descriptive best in Tunisia—brings him up against the emptiness of himself. . . . Ironies abound and they are very tasty. Nice touches of detail are constantly flicking some blood into the skin of the book. . . . [The *Barbary Light*] is full of sudden rich flashes of light, when Mr Newby's vision seems to burst into flame.' *Sunday Times*.

'The *Barbary Light* is exceedingly well, and also, for it is not quite the same thing, most skilfully written. Indeed P. H. Newby's skill is almost great enough to get one to look kindly on Owen Hanner who, out of sheer boredom with himself and his job, behaves with chilly and incompetent brutality to his wife and mistress and blatantly outrages the ethics of his profession.

'The extreme stupidity of his conduct neither conceals nor redeems its essential nastiness. But if Hanner tends to cancel himself out, the people round him—his generous wife, his puzzled, unhopeful mistress, the visionary bankrupt he swindles, the boundingly energetic business twister he gets half caught up with, the war-time crony who tries to save him from the consequences of his acts—these are wholly successful; familiar and yet fresh, entirely without mechanical typicality. . . . Mr Newby illuminates an ordinary commuterish world with genuine imagination. The dialogue is accurate and often very funny and there is no superfluous matter in the book. If anything, too much is left out.' *Sunday Telegraph*.

Faber 18s; CF 7s, post free

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## WANTED

MR J. R. TAPLIN, of 143 Holcombe Street, Derby, wants to obtain a copy of *The Space Merchants* by Frederic Pohl and C. M. Kornbluth, and of *Timeliner* by Charles Eric Maine.

Mr J. Simpson, of 22 Wyatt House Annexe, 1-4 Blackheath Grove, London, S.E.3, would like to obtain a copy of *The Second Foundation* by Isaac Asimov.

Mr F. J. Steward wants to obtain a copy of Lester Del Rey's *Nerves*; his address is 219 Valley Road, Ipswich, Suffolk.

Will anyone who can help please get into touch with these three members direct.

THIS MONTH'S CHOICE IS

**DARK UNIVERSE**

by Daniel Galouye

(Gollancz 15s; SFBC 6s)

THIS MONTH'S EXTRA (OPTIONAL) IS

**SPECTRUM II, edited by**

**Kingsley Amis and Robert Conquest**

(Gollancz 18s; SFBC 11s 6d, post free)

NEXT MONTH'S CHOICE IS

**NO FUTURE IN IT**

by John Brunner

(Gollancz 15s; SFBC 6s)