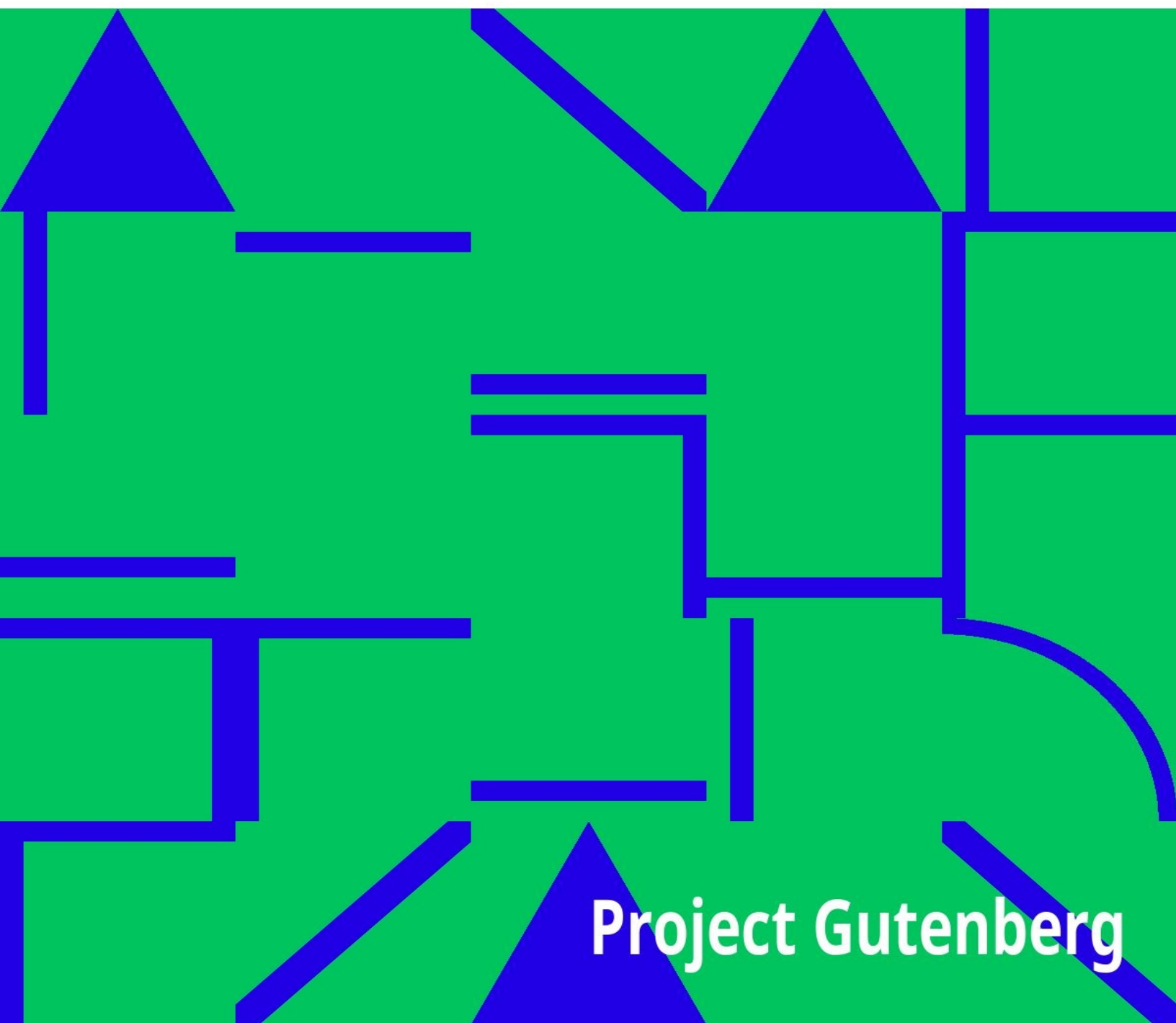


A Matter of Proportion

Anne Walker



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**A
MATTER
OF
PROPORTION**

In order to make a man stop, you must convince him that it's impossible to go on. Some people, though, just can't be convinced.

BY ANNE WALKER

Illustrated by Bernklau

I

IN THE dark, our glider chutes zeroed neatly on target—only Art Benjamin missed the edge of the gorge. When we were sure Invader hadn't heard the crashing of bushes, I climbed down after him. The climb, and what I found, left me shaken. A Special Corps squad leader is not expendable—by order. Clyde Esterbrook, my second and ICEG mate, would have to mine the viaduct while my nerve and glycogen stabilized.

We timed the patrols. Clyde said, "Have to wait till a train's coming. No time otherwise." Well, it was his show. When the next pair of burly-coated men came over at a trot, he breathed, "Now!" and ghosted out almost before they were clear.

I switched on the ICEG—inter-cortical encephalograph—planted in my temporal bone. My own senses could hear young Ferd breathing, feel and smell the mat of pine needles under me. Through Clyde's, I could hear the blind whuffle of wind in the girders, feel the crude wood of ties and the iron-cold molding of rails in the star-dark. I could feel, too, an odd, lilted elation in his mind, as if this savage universe were a good thing to take on—spray guns, cold, and all.

We wanted to set the mine so the wreckage would clobber a trail below, one like they'd built in Burma and Japan, where you wouldn't think a monkey could go; but it probably carried more supplies than the viaduct itself. So Clyde made adjustments precisely, just as we'd figured it with the model back at base. It was a tricky, slow job in the bitter dark.

I began to figure: If he armed it for this train, and ran, she'd go off while we were on location and we'd be drenched in searchlights and spray guns. Already, through his fingers, I felt the hum in the rails that every tank-town-reared kid knows. I turned up my ICEG. "All right, Clyde, get back. Arm it when she's gone past, for the next one."

I felt him grin, felt his lips form words: "I'll do better than that, Willie. Look, Daddy-o, no hands!" He slid over the edge and rested elbows and ribs on the raw tie ends.

We're all acrobats in the Corps. But I didn't like this act one little bit. Even if he could hang by his hands, the heavy train would jolt him off. But I swallowed my thoughts.

He groped with his foot, contacted a sloping beam, and brought his other foot in. I felt a dull, scraping slither under his moccasin soles. "Frost," he thought calmly, rubbed a clear patch with the edge of his foot, put his weight on it, and transferred his hands to the beam with a twist we hadn't learned in Corps school. My heart did a double-take; one slip and he'd be off into the gorge, and the frost stung, melting under his bare fingers. He lay in the trough of the massive H-beam, slid down about twenty feet to where it made an angle with an upright, and wedged himself there. It took all of twenty seconds, really. But I let out a breath as if I'd been holding it for minutes.

As he settled, searchlights began skimming the bridge. If he'd been running, he'd have been shot to a sieve. As it was, they'd never see him in the mingled glare and black.

His heart hadn't even speeded up beyond what was required by exertion. The train roared around a shoulder and onto the viaduct, shaking it like an angry hand. But as the boxcars thunder-clattered above his head, he was peering into the gulf at a string of feeble lights threading the bottom. "There's the flywalk, Willie. They know their stuff. But we'll get it." Then, as the caboose careened over and the searchlights cut off, "Well, that gives us ten minutes before the patrol comes back."

He levered onto his side, a joint at a time, and began to climb the beam. Never again for me, even by proxy! You just *couldn't* climb that thing nohow! The slope was too steep. The beam was too massive to shinny, yet too narrow to lie inside and elbow up. The metal was too smooth, and scummed with frost. His fingers were beginning to numb. And—he *was* climbing!

In each fin of the beam, every foot or so, was a round hole. He'd get one finger into a hole and pull, inching his body against the beam. He timed himself to some striding music I didn't know, not fast but no waste motion, even the pauses

rhythmic.

I tell you. I was sweating under my leathers. Maybe I should have switched the ICEG off, for my own sake if not to avoid distracting Clyde. But I was hypnotized, climbing.

In the old days, when you were risking your neck, you were supposed to think great solemn thoughts. Recently, you're supposed to think about something silly like a singing commercial. Clyde's mind was neither posturing in front of his mental mirror nor running in some feverish little circle. He faced terror as big as the darkness from gorge bottom to stars, and he was just simply as big as it was—sheer life exulting in defying the dark, the frost and wind and the zombie grip of Invader. I envied him.

Then his rhythm checked. Five feet from the top, he reached confidently for a finger hole ... No hole.

He had already reached as high as he could without shifting his purchase and risking a skid—and even his wrestler's muscles wouldn't make the climb again. My stomach quaked: Never see sunlight in the trees any more, just cling till dawn picked you out like a crow's nest in a dead tree; or drop ...

Not Clyde. His flame of life crouched in anger. Not only the malice of nature and the rage of enemies, but human shiftlessness against him too? Good! He'd take it on.

Shoulder, thigh, knee, foot scraped off frost. He jammed his jaw against the wet iron. His right hand never let go, but it crawled up the fin of the strut like a blind animal, while the load on his points of purchase mounted—watchmaker coordination where you'd normally think in boilermaker terms. The flame sank to a spark as he focused, but it never blinked out. This was not the anticipated, warded danger, but the trick punch from nowhere. This was It. A sneak squall buffeted him. I cursed thinly. But he sensed an extra purchase from its pressure, and reached the last four inches with a swift glide. The next hole was there.

He waited five heartbeats, and pulled. He began at the muscular disadvantage of aligned joints. He had to make it the first time; if you can't do it with a dollar, you won't do it with the change. But as elbow and shoulder bent, the flame soared again: Score one more for life!

A minute later, he hooked his arm over the butt of a tie, his chin, his other arm,

and hung a moment. He didn't throw a knee up, just rolled and lay between the rails. Even as he relaxed, he glanced at his watch: three minutes to spare. Leisurely, he armed the mine and jogged back to me and Ferd.

As I broke ICEG contact, his flame had sunk to an ember glow of anticipation.

We had almost reached the cave pricked on our map, when we heard the slam of the mine, wee and far-off. We were lying doggo looking out at the snow peaks incandescent in dawn when the first Invader patrols trailed by below. Our equipment was a miracle of hot food and basic medication. Not pastimes, though; and by the second day of hiding, I was thinking too much. There was Clyde, an Inca chief with a thread of black mustache and incongruous hazel eyes, my friend and ICEG mate—what made him tick? Where did he get his delight in the bright eyes of danger? How did he gear his daredevil valor, not to the icy iron and obligatory killing, but to the big music and stars over the gorge? But in the Corps, we don't ask questions and, above all, never eavesdrop on ICEG.

Young Ferd wasn't so inhibited. Benjamin's death had shaken him—losing your ICEG mate is like losing an eye. He began fly-fishing Clyde: How had Clyde figured that stunt, in the dark, with the few minutes he'd had?

"There's always a way, Ferd, if you're fighting for what you really want."

"Well, I want to throw out Invader, all right, but—"

"That's the start, of course, but beyond that—" He changed the subject: perhaps only I knew of his dream about a stronghold for rebels far in these mountains. He smiled. "I guess you get used to calculated risks. Except for imagination, you're as safe walking a ledge twenty stories up, as down on the sidewalk."

"Not if you trip."

"That's the calculated risk. If you climb, you get used to it."

"Well, how did you *get* used to it? Were you a mountaineer or an acrobat?"

"In a way, both." Clyde smiled again, a trifle bitterly and switched the topic. "Anyway, I've been in action for the duration except some time in hospital."

Ferd was onto that boner like an infielder. To get into SC you have to be not only

championship fit, but have no history of injury that could crop up to haywire you in a pinch. So, "Hospital? You sure don't show it now."

Clyde was certainly below par. To cover his slip he backed into a bigger, if less obvious, one. "Oh, I was in that Operation Armada at Golden Gate. Had to be patched up."

He must have figured, Ferd had been a kid then, and I hadn't been too old. Odds were, we'd recall the episode, and no more. Unfortunately, I'd been a ham operator and I'd been in the corps that beamed those fireships onto the Invader supply fleet in the dense fog. The whole episode was burned into my brain. It had been kamikaze stuff, though there'd been a theoretical chance of the thirty men escaping, to justify sending them out. Actually, one escape boat did get back with three men.

I'd learned about those men, out of morbid, conscience-scalded curiosity. Their leader was Edwin Scott, a medical student. At the very start he'd been shot through the lower spine. So, his companions put him in the escape boat while they clinched their prey. But as the escape boat sheered off, the blast of enemy fire killed three and disabled two.

Scott must have been some boy. He'd already doctored himself with hemostatics and local anaesthetics but, from the hips down, he was dead as salt pork, and his visceral reflexes must have been reacting like a worm cut with a hoe. Yet somehow, he doctored the two others and got that boat home.

The other two had died, but Scott lived as sole survivor of Operation Armada. And he hadn't been a big, bronze, Latin-Indian with incongruous hazel eyes, but a snub-nosed redhead. And he'd been wheel-chaired for life. They'd patched him up, decorated him, sent him to a base hospital in Wisconsin where he could live in whatever comfort was available. So, he dropped out of sight. And now, this!

Clyde was lying, of course. He'd picked the episode at random. Except that so much else about him didn't square. Including his name compared to his physique, now I thought about it.

I tabled it during our odyssey home. But during post-mission leave, it kept bothering me. I checked, and came up with what I'd already known: Scott *had* been sole survivor, and the others were certified dead. But about Scott, I got a runaround. He'd apparently vanished. Oh, they'd check for me, but that could

take years. Which didn't lull my curiosity any. Into Clyde's past I was sworn not to pry.

We were training for our next assignment, when word came through of the surrender at Kelowna. It was a flare of sunlight through a black sky. The end was suddenly close.

Clyde and I were in Victoria, British Columbia. Not subscribing to the folkway that prescribes seasick intoxication as an expression of joy, we did the town with discrimination. At midnight we found ourselves strolling along the waterfront in that fine, Vancouver-Island mist, with just enough drink taken to be moving through a dream. At one point, we leaned on a rail to watch the mainland lights twinkling dimly like the hope of a new world—blackout being lifted.

Suddenly, Clyde said, "What's fraying you recently, Will? When we were taking our ICEG reconditioning, it came through strong as garlic, though you wouldn't notice it normally."

Why be coy about an opening like that? "Clyde, what do you know about Edwin Scott?" That let him spin any yarn he chose—if he chose.

He did the cigarette-lighting routine, and said quietly, "Well, I *was* Edwin Scott, Will." Then, as I waited, "Yes, really me, the real me talking to you. This," he held out a powerful, coppery hand, "once belonged to a man called Marco da Sanhao ... You've heard of transplanting limbs?"

I had. But this man was no transplant job. And if a spinal cord is cut, transplanting legs from Ippalovsky, the primo ballerino, is worthless. I said, "What about it?"

"I was the first—successful—brain transplant in man."

For a moment, it queered me, but only a moment. Hell, you read in fairy tales and fantasy magazines about one man's mind in another man's body, and it's marvelous, not horrible. But—

By curiosity, I know a bit about such things. A big surgery journal, back in the '40s, had published a visionary article on grafting a whole limb, with colored plates as if for a real procedure^[A]. Then they'd developed techniques for acclimating a graft to the host's serum, so it would not react as a foreign body. First, they'd transplanted hunks of ear and such; then, in the '60s, fingers, feet, and whole arms in fact.

But a brain is another story. A cut nerve can grow together; every fiber has an insulating sheath which survives the cut and guides growing stumps back to their stations. In the brain and spinal cord, no sheaths; growing fibers have about the chance of restoring contact that you'd have of traversing the Amazon jungle on foot without a map. I said so.

"I know," he said, "I learned all I could, and as near as I can put it, it's like this: When you cut your finger, it can heal in two ways. Usually it bleeds, scabs, and skin grows under the scab, taking a week or so. But if you align the edges exactly, at once, they may join almost immediately healing by First Intent. Likewise in the brain, if they line up cut nerve fibers before the cut-off bit degenerates, it'll join up with the stump. So, take a serum-conditioned brain and fit it to the stem of another brain so that the big fiber bundles are properly fitted together, fast enough, and you can get better than ninety per cent recovery."

"Sure," I said, parading my own knowledge, "but what about injury to the masses of nerve cells? And you'd have to shear off the nerves growing out of the brain."

"There's always a way, Willie. There's a place in the brain stem called the isthmus, no cell masses, just bundles of fibers running up and down. Almost all the nerves come off below that point; and the few that don't can be spliced together, except the smell nerves and optic nerve. Ever notice I can't smell, Willie? And they transplanted my eyes with the brain—biggest trick of the whole job."

It figured. But, "I'd still hate to go through with it."

"What could I lose? Some paraplegics seem to live a fuller life than ever. Me, I was going mad. And I'd seen the dogs this research team at my hospital was working on—old dogs' brains in whelps' bodies, spry as natural.

"Then came the chance. Da Sanhao was a Brazilian wrestler stranded here by the war. Not his war, he said; but he did have the decency to volunteer as medical orderly. But he got conscripted by a bomb that took a corner off the hospital and one off his head. They got him into chemical stasis quicker than it'd ever been done before, but he was dead as a human being—no brain worth salvaging above the isthmus. So, the big guns at the hospital saw a chance to try their game on human material, superb body and lower nervous system in ideal condition,

waiting for a brain. Only, whose?

"Naturally, some big-shot's near the end of his rope and willing to gamble. But *I* decided it would be a forgotten little-shot, name of Edwin Scott. I already knew the surgeons from being a guinea pig on ICEG. Of course, when I sounded them out, they gave me a kindly brush-off: The matter was out of the their hands. However, I knew whose hands it *was* in. And I waited for my chance—a big job that needed somebody expendable. Then I'd make a deal, writing my own ticket because they'd figure I'd never collect. Did you hear about Operation Seed-corn?"

That was the underground railway that ran thousands of farmers out of occupied territory. Manpower was what finally broke Invader, improbable as it seems. Epidemics, desertions, over-extended lines, thinned that overwhelming combat strength; and every farmer spirited out of their hands equalled ten casualties. I nodded.

"Well, I planned that with myself as director. And sold it to Filipson."

I contemplated him: just a big man in a trench coat and droop-brimmed hat silhouetted against the lamp-lit mist. I said, "You directed Seed-corn out of a wheel chair in enemy territory, and came back to get transplanted into another body? Man, you didn't tell Ferd a word of a lie when you said you were used to walking up to death." (But there was more: Besides that dour Scot's fortitude, where did he come by that high-hearted valor?)

He shrugged. "You do what you can with what you've got. *Those* weren't the big adventures I was thinking about when I said that. I had a team behind me in those—"

I could only josh. "I'd sure like to hear the capperoo then."

He toed out his cigarette. "You're the only person who's equipped for it. Maybe you'd get it, Willie."

"How do you mean?"

"I kept an ICEG record. Not that I knew it was going to happen, just wanted proof if they gave me a deal and I pulled it off. Filipson wouldn't renege, but generals were expendable. No one knew I had that transmitter in my temporal bone, and I rigged it to get a tape on my home receiver. Like to hear it?"

I said what anyone would, and steered him back to quarters before he'd think better of it. This would be something!

On the way, he filled in background. Scott had been living out of hospital in a small apartment, enjoying as much liberty as he could manage. He had equipment so he could stump around, and an antique car specially equipped. He wasn't complimentary about them. Orthopedic products had to be: unreliable, hard to service, unsightly, intricate, and uncomfortable. If they also squeaked and cut your clothes, fine!

Having to plan every move with an eye on weather and a dozen other factors, he developed in uncanny foresight. Yet he had to improvise at a moment's notice. With life a continuous high-wire act, he trained every surviving fiber to precision, dexterity, and tenacity. Finally, he avoided help. Not pride, self-preservation; the compulsively helpful have rarely the wit to ask before rushing in to knock you on your face, so he learned to bide his time till the horizon was clear of beaming simpletons. Also, he found an interest in how far he could go.

These qualities, and the time he had for thinking, begot Seed-corn. When he had it convincing, he applied to see General Filipson, head of Regional Intelligence, a man with both insight and authority to make the deal—but also as tough as his post demanded. Scott got an appointment two weeks ahead.

That put it early in April, which decreased the weather hazard—a major consideration in even a trip to the Supermarket. What was Scott's grim consternation, then, when he woke on D-day to find his windows plastered with snow under a driving wind—not mentioned in last night's forecast of course.

He could concoct a plausible excuse for postponement—which Filipson was just the man to see through; or call help to get him to HQ—and have Filipson bark, "Man, you can't even make it across town on your own power because of a little snow." No, come hell or blizzard, he'd have to go solo. Besides, when he faced the inevitable unexpected behind Invader lines, he couldn't afford a precedent of having flinched now.

He dressed and breakfasted with all the petty foresights that can mean the shaving of clearance in a tight squeeze, and got off with all the margin of time he could muster. In the apartment court, he had a parking space by the basement exit and, for a wonder, no free-wheeling nincompoop had done him out of it last

night. Even so, getting to the car door illustrated the ordeal ahead; the snow was the damp, heavy stuff that packs and glares. The streets were nasty, but he had the advantage of having learned restraint and foresight.

HQ had been the post office, a ponderous red-stone building filling a whole block. He had scouted it thoroughly in advance, outside and in, and scheduled his route to the general's office, allowing for minor hazards. Now, he had half an hour extra for the unscheduled major hazard.

But on arriving, he could hardly believe his luck. No car was yet parked in front of the building, and the walk was scraped clean and salted to kill the still falling flakes. No problems. He parked and began to unload himself quickly, to forestall the elderly MP who hurried towards him. But, as Scott prepared to thank him off, the man said, "Sorry, Mac, no one can park there this morning."

Scott felt the chill of nemesis. Knowing it was useless, he protested his identity and mission.

But, "Sorry, major. But you'll have to park around back. They're bringing in the big computer. General himself can't park here. Them's orders."

He could ask the sergeant to park the car. But the man couldn't leave his post, would make a to-do calling someone—and that was Filipson's suite overlooking the scene. No dice. Go see what might be possible.

But side and back parking were jammed with refugees from the computer, and so was the other side. And he came around to the front again. Five minutes wasted. He thought searchingly.

He could drive to a taxi lot, park there, and be driven back by taxi, disembark on the clean walk, and there you were. Of course, he could hear Filipson's "Thought you drove your own car, ha?" and his own damaging excuses. But even Out Yonder, you'd cut corners in emergency. It was all such a comfortable Out, he relaxed. And, relaxing, saw his alternative.

He was driving around the block again, and noted the back entrance. This was not ground level, because of the slope of ground; it faced a broad landing, reached by a double flight of steps. These began on each side at right-angles to the building and then turned up to the landing along the face of the wall. Normally, they were negotiable; but now, even had he found parking near them,

he hadn't the chance of the celluloid cat in hell of even crossing the ten feet of uncleaned sidewalk. You might as well climb an eighty-degree, fifty-foot wall of rotten ice. But there was always a way, and he saw it.

The unpassable walk itself was an avenue of approach. He swung his car onto it at the corner, and drove along it to the steps to park in the angle between steps and wall—and discovered a new shut-out. He'd expected the steps to be a mean job in the raw wind that favored this face of the building; but a wartime janitor had swept them sketchily only down the middle, far from the balustrades he must use. By the balustrades, early feet had packed a semi-ice far more treacherous than the untouched snow; and, the two bottom steps curved out beyond the balustrade. So ... a sufficiently reckless alpinist might assay a cliff in a sleet storm and gale, but he couldn't even try if it began with an overhang.

Still time for the taxi. And so, again Scott saw the way that was always there: Set the car so he could use its hood to heft up those first steps.

Suddenly, his thinking metamorphosed: He faced, not a miserable, unwarranted forlorn hope, but the universe as it was. Titanic pressure suit against the hurricanes of Jupiter, and against a gutter freshet, life was always outclassed—and always fought back. Proportions didn't matter, only mood.

He switched on his ICEG to record what might happen. I auditioned it, but I can't disentangle it from what he told me. For example, in his words: Multiply distances by five, heights by ten, and slickness by twenty. And in the playback: Thirty chin-high ledges loaded with soft lard, and only finger holds and toe holds. And you did it on stilts that began, not at your heels, at your hips. Add the hazard of Helpful Hosea: "Here, lemme giveya hand, Mac!", grabbing the key arm, and crashing down the precipice on top of you.

Switching on the ICEG took his mind back to the snug apartment where its receiver stood, the armchair, books, desk of diverting work. It looked awful good, but ... life fought back, and always it found a way.

He shucked his windbreaker because it would be more encumbrance than help in the showdown. He checked, shoelaces, and strapped on the cleats he had made for what they were worth. He vetoed the bag of sand and salt he kept for minor difficulties—far too slow. He got out of the car.

This could be the last job he'd have to do incognito—Seed-corn, he'd get credit

for. Therefore, he cherished it: triumph for its own sake. Alternatively, he'd end at the bottom in a burlesque clutter of chrom-alum splints and sticks, with maybe a broken bone to clinch the decision. For some men, death is literally more tolerable than defeat in humiliation.

Eighteen shallow steps to the turn, twelve to the top. Once, he'd have cleared it in three heartbeats. Now, he had to make it to a twenty-minute deadline, without rope or alpenstock, a Moon-man adapted to a fraction of Earth gravity.

With the help of the car hood, the first two pitches were easy. For the next four or five, wind had swept the top of the balustrade, providing damp, gritty handhold. Before the going got tougher, he developed a technic, a rhythm and system of thrusts proportioned to heights and widths, a way of scraping holds where ice was not malignantly welded to stone, an appreciation of snow texture and depth, an economy of effort.

He was enjoying a premature elation when, on the twelfth step, a cleat strap gave. Luckily, he was able to take his lurch with a firm grip on the balustrade; but he felt depth yawning behind him. Dourly, he took thirty seconds to retrieve the cleat; stitching had been sawed through by a metal edge—just as he'd told the cocksure workman it would be. Oh, to have a world where imbecility wasn't entrenched! Well—he was fighting here and now for the resources to found one. He resumed the escalade, his rhythm knocked cockeyed.

Things even out. Years back, an Invader bomber had scored a near miss on the building, and minor damage to stonework was unrepaired. Crevices gave fingerhold, chipped-out hollows gave barely perceptible purchase to the heel of his hand. Salutes to the random effects of unlikely causes!

He reached the turn, considered swiftly. His fresh strength was blunted; his muscles, especially in his thumbs, were stiffening with chill. Now: He could continue up the left side, by the building, which was tougher and hazardous with frozen drippings, or by the outside, right-hand rail, which was easier but meant crossing the open, half-swept wide step and recrossing the landing up top. Damn! Why hadn't he foreseen that? Oh, you can't think of everything. Get going, left side.

The wall of the building was rough-hewn and ornamented with surplus carvings. Cheers for the 1890s architect!

Qualified cheers. The first three lifts were easy, with handholds in a frieze of lotus. For the next, he had to heft with his side-jaw against a boss of stone. A window ledge made the next three facile. The final five stared, an open gap without recourse. He made two by grace of the janitor's having swabbed his broom a little closer to the wall. His muscles began to wobble and waver: in his proportions, he'd made two-hundred feet of almost vertical ascent.

But, climbing a real ice-fall, you'd unleash the last convulsive effort because you had to. Here, when you came down to it, you could always sit and bump yourself down to the car which was, in that context, a mere safe forty feet away. So he went on because he had to.

He got the rubber tip off one stick. The bare metal tube would bore into the snow pack. It might hold, *if* he bore down just right, and swung his weight just so, and got just the right sliding purchase on the wall, and the snow didn't give underfoot or undercane. And if it didn't work—it didn't work.

Beyond the landing, westwards, the sky had broken into April blue, far away over Iowa and Kansas, over Operation Seed-corn, over the refuge for rebels that lay at the end of all his roads....

He got set ... and lifted. A thousand miles nearer the refuge! Got set ... and lifted, balanced over plunging gulfs. His reach found a round pilaster at the top, a perfect grip for a hand. He drew himself up, and this time his cleated foot cut through snow to stone, and slipped, but his hold was too good. And there he was.

No salutes, no cheers, only one more victory for life.

Even in victory, unlife gave you no respite. The doorstep was three feet wide, hollowed by eighty years of traffic, and filled with frozen drippings from its pseudo-Norman arch. He had to tilt across it and catch the brass knob—like snatching a ring in a high dive.

No danger now, except sitting down in a growing puddle till someone came along to hoist him under the armpits, and then arriving at the general's late, with his seat black-wet.... You unhorse your foeman, curvet up to the royal box to receive the victor's chaplet, swing from your saddle, and fall flat on your face.

But, he cogitated on the bench inside, getting his other cleat off and the tip back on his stick, things do even out. No hearty helper had intervened, no snot-nosed, gaping child had twitched his attention, nobody's secretary—pretty of course—

had scurried to helpfully knock him down with the door. They were all out front superintending arrival of the computer.

The general said only, if tartly, "Oh yes, major, come in. You're late, a'n't you?"

"It's still icy," said Ed Scott. "Had to drive carefully, you know."

In fact, he *had* lost minutes that way, enough to have saved his exact deadline. And that excuse, being in proportion to Filipson's standard dimension, was fair game.

I wondered what dimension Clyde would go on to, now that the challenge of war was past. To his rebels refuge at last maybe? Does it matter? Whatever it is, life will be outclassed, and Scott-Esterbrook's brand of life will fight back.

THE END

FOOTNOTES:

[A] Hall, "Whole Upper Extremity Transplant for Human Beings." *Annals of Surgery* 1944, #120, p. 12.

Transcriber's Note:

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