


Heart

Henry Slesar

A decorative graphic consisting of a large teal triangle pointing upwards from the bottom left, a vertical teal bar, and a horizontal teal bar, all set against a light blue background.

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HEART

By HENRY SLESAR

Monk had three questions he lived by: Where can I find it? How much will it cost? When can you deliver? But now they said that what he needed wasn't for sale. "Want to bet?" He snorted.

S

ystole ... diastole ... the Cardiophone listened, hummed, and recorded; tracing a path of perilous peaks and precipices on the white paper.

"Relax!" Dr. Rostov pleaded. "Please relax, Mr. Monk!"

The eyes of Fletcher Monk replied. Rostov knew their language well enough to read the glaring messages they transmitted. Indignation ... *"Don't use that commanding tone with me, Doctor!"* Protest ... *"I am relaxed; completely relaxed!"* Warning.... *"Get me out of this electric chair, Rostov!"*

The physician sighed and clicked the apparatus off. Swiftly, but with knowing fingers, he disengaged his patient from the wire and rubber encumbrances of the reclining seat. Fletcher Monk sat up and rubbed his forearms, watching every movement the doctor made as he prepared to study the results of his examination.

"You're fussing, Rostov," he said coldly. "My shirt."

"In a moment."

"Now," said Monk impatiently.

The physician shook his head sadly. He handed Monk his shirt and waited until the big man had buttoned it half way down. Then he returned to the Cardiophone for a more critical study. A fine analysis was hardly necessary; the alarming story had been told with the first measurements of the heart machine.

Money buys anything, I tell you—anything!
Money buys anything, I tell you—anything!

"Cut it out," said Monk brusquely. "You've got that death's-head look again, Rostov. If you want to say something, say it."

"You were tight as a drum," said the doctor. "That's going to influence my findings, you know. If you hadn't refused the narcotic—"

Fletcher Monk barked: "I won't be drugged!"

"It would have relaxed you—"

"I was as relaxed as I ever am," the other man said candidly, and Rostov recognized the truth of his analysis. Monk lived in a world of taut muscles and nerves stretched out just below the breaking point. Tenseness was his trademark; there was no more elasticity in Monk's body than there was in the hard cash he accumulated so readily.

"Well?" the patient jeered. "What's the verdict, you damned sawbones? Going to throw away my cigars? Going to send me on a long sea voyage?"

Rostov frowned.

"Don't look so smug!" Monk exploded. "I know you think there's something wrong with me. You can't wait to bury me!"

"You're sick, Mr. Monk," said the doctor. "You're very sick."

Monk glowered. "You're wrong," he said icily. "You've made a lousy diagnosis."

"What was that feeling you described?" asked Rostov. "Remember what you told me? Like a big, black bird, flapping its wings in your chest. Didn't that mean something to you, Mr. Monk?"



The industrialist paled. "All right. Get to the point," he said quietly. "What did that gadget tell you?"

"Bad news," said the doctor. "Your heart's been strained almost to bursting. It's working on will power, Mr. Monk; hardly anything else."

"*Get to the point!*" Monk shouted.

"That is the point," Rostov said stiffly. "You have a serious heart condition. A dangerous condition. You've ignored eight years of my advice, and now your heart is showing the effects."

"What can it do to me?"

"Kill you," said the doctor bluntly. "Frankly, I can't even promise that the usual precautions will do any good. But we have no other choice than to take them. The human body is a miraculous affair, and even the most desperate damages sometimes can't prevent it from going on living. But I won't mince words with you, Mr. Monk. You're a direct sort of person, so I'm telling you directly. Your chances are slim."

Monk sat down and put his black tie on distractedly. He sat deep in thought for a while, and then said:

"How much would it cost to fix it?"

"What?"

"Money!" the big man cried. "How much money would it take to get me repaired?"

"But it's not a matter of money—"

"Don't give me that!" Monk put his jacket on with a violent motion. "I've learned better than that in my fifty years, Dr. Rostov. Money fixes everything. Everything! I could curdle your milk by telling you some of the things I've fixed with money!"

The physician shrugged. "Money doesn't buy health."

"Doesn't it?" The patient gave an abrupt laugh. "Money buys people, Dr. Rostov. It buys loyalty and disloyalty. It buys friends and sells enemies. All these are commodities, Doctor. I found that out—the hard way."

"Mr. Monk, you don't know what I'm telling you. Your heart action is unreliable, and no amount of dollars can bring it back to normal—"

The industrialist stood up. "You think the heart is incorruptible, eh?" He snorted. "Well, I think different. Someplace on earth there's a man or a method that can

fix me up. It'll take money to find the answer, that's for sure. But I'll find it!"

Rostov put out his hand helplessly. "You're being unreasonable, Mr. Monk. There is nothing on earth—"

"*All right!*" Fletcher Monk shouted. "So maybe there's nothing on Earth!" His body trembled with his emotion. "Then I'll go to the stars, if I have to!"

Rostov started. "If you mean this gravity business—"

"What's that?" Monk froze. "What's that you said?"

"This gravity thing," the doctor said. "This silly story about the Mars Colony they've been spreading—"

"What silly story?" asked Monk, narrowing his eyes. "I haven't heard it. What do you mean?"

Rostov regretted his words. But he knew it was too late to stop the industrialist from extracting the details from him. He made a despairing gesture and went over to his desk. From the top drawer, he withdrew a folded sheet torn from the pages of a daily newspaper that specialized in lurid articles and wild imaginings.

Monk snatched it from the doctor's hand. "Let me see that!" he said. He turned the paper over in his hand until he found the red-pencilled article the doctor had referred to.

"MARS BOON TO HEART CASES, SAYS SPACE DOCTOR." Monk read the headline aloud, and then looked at Rostov.

"It's a misquotation," the physician said. "Dr. Feasley never made such a bald statement. They've taken something out of context to make a sensational story —"

"Let me see for myself," snapped Monk.

He began to read. "... 'Space Medicine Association ... Dr. Samuel Feasley,

renowned' ... here it is!... 'the effects of Earth's gravitational pull on the body versus the relatively light gravitation encountered by the members of the Martian Colony ... two-fifths the pull of Earth ... interesting speculation on the heart action...!' He crushed the paper in his hands. "By God!" he cried. "Here's my answer, you gloomy old fool!"

"No, no!" said Rostov hurriedly. "You don't know what you're saying—"

Fletcher Monk laughed loudly. "I always know what I'm saying, Doctor Rostov. Here it is in black and white! Why should I die on Earth—when I can live on Mars?"

"But it's impossible! There are so many problems—"

"Money solves problems!"

"Not this one!" said the doctor heatedly. "Not the problem of acceleration! You'll never reach Mars alive!"

Monk paused. "What do you mean?" he blinked.

"The acceleration will kill you!" Rostov said in a shaking voice. "Three G's are enough to burst that sick heart of yours. And the acceleration reaches a gravity of *nine* at one point. You'd never make it!"

"I'll never make it *here*," said Monk, biting out the words. "You told me that yourself."

"At least there's a chance," the doctor argued. "A slim one, surely. But you're talking about almost certain death!"

"How do you know?" said Monk contemptuously. "You've never had anything to do with space medicine. You're what they call a groundworm, Doc. Just like me."

"You'll never even get aboard a spaceship. There's a rigid physical examination required. You couldn't pass it in a million years! It's suicide to think of it."



Monk paced the floor. "But if I did pass it—"

"Impossible!"

"But if I *did*," Monk insisted. "Would my chances for living be better on Mars?"

"I suppose so. Your heart wouldn't have to work nearly so hard. You'd weigh less than ninety pounds...."

"Then it's worth a try, isn't it?" He grasped the physician by the shoulders and shook him. "Isn't it?" he shouted.

"Mr. Monk, I can't let you even consider it!"

"*You* can't?" Monk looked at him threateningly. "Are you dictating my affairs now, Doctor? Are you forgetting who I am?"

"The Mars Colony is a working organization," the doctor said, desperately. "The life there is hard, rugged—"

"*Hard*?" Monk roared. "Hardness and Monk are synonymous words, Doctor Rostov. Don't you read the papers? Don't you know what they call me? The Iron Millionaire!" He laughed. "And there's something else you're not aware of. I own a lot of this country. But I also own a good piece of the Mars Colony. Just let 'em try and stop me!"

Rostov threw his hands in the air. "You're completely off balance, Mr. Monk. What you're thinking about is impossible in a dozen different ways. But I'm not going to worry about it. You'll never get near a space vessel—"

"That remains to be seen," said Monk.

"The best thing for you," the doctor continued, "is to start slowing down—right now, today. And the first project we have to work on is the loss of some thirty or forty pounds. You're much too heavy for that heart of yours."

Monk didn't appear to be listening. Thoughtfully, he reached inside his coat and brought out a long black cigar. He bit off the end and spat it out onto the polished floor of the examining room.

"You'll have to lose those, too," the doctor cautioned. "Cigars are out."

Fletcher Monk jammed the cigar between his teeth. He looked at the doctor and smiled grimly.

"O.K., Doc," he said. "I'm going to follow your advice. And the first thing I'm

going to arrange is the loss of some weight." He lit the cigar and puffed heavily. "About a hundred and thirty pounds," he said.

Monk put his hat on his head and walked out. He felt better already.

Monk found his informant in the person of a Spacelane employee named Horner. Garcia, the converted hood that now "assisted" Monk in his personal affairs, brought the Spacelane man into the industrialist's office and gestured him into a chair.

"All right," said Monk. "Garcia's told you what I want. Now let's go." He picked up a paper from his desk, and began to read off the list of typewritten names.

"Houston," he said.

"No good," said Horner. "He's the dispatch officer. Crusty old guy. Spent eleven years in space, and he's plenty mean."

"I don't care about his disposition," said Monk testily. "Can he be bought?"

Horner shook his head. "I doubt it."

"All right, then." Monk rattled the paper. "How about Roth?"

"Uh-uh. He's the Chief Medical Officer. Very Army. He helped draft the original physical standards for space flight."

"Davis!" said Monk.

"Well ..." Horner looked pensive. "He doesn't mind a fast buck now and then. But he's only a Supplies Officer. He couldn't do anything about smuggling you aboard."

"Christy."

"Don't know much about Christy. He's a pilot, and pretty close-mouthed. Spends most of his time between trips in the bosom of his family, so to speak. Which is maybe understandable, because he's got a wife that is absolutely—"

"Skip that junk," said Garcia toughly. "The boss wants facts."

"Keep out of this, you," said Monk. He smiled humorlessly at Horner. "What about Christy's wife?"

"Well, she's—I mean, she's a looker, understand? A real beauty. Only from what I heard around the base, she's a groundworm's delight, if you know what I mean —"

"I don't know what you mean," said Monk patiently.

"Well, with her husband away six months out of every year, and a swell-lookin' doll like that ... Figure it out for yourself."

Monk grunted. "I'll keep it in mind," he said. "Now how about this fellow Forsch?"

"Maybe there's something there," said Horner. "He's a doctor, too. Handles most of the routine physicals. But I heard a rumor about some pretty unethical practices he was mixed up in before he took this job. There may be nothing to it, but if you could look into it—"

"I will," said Monk abruptly. He handed the paper over to the Spacelane employee. "Anybody else here you want to tell me about?"

Horner looked over the list.

"That's about it, I guess," he said. "Nobody here can do you any good. But you look into this guy Forsch. He may be your boy."

Monk smiled tightly.

"Pay him," he said to Garcia.

When the detectives handed Fletcher Monk the completed report on the activities of Diana Christy, he read it through thoroughly, savoring each juicy word between puffs of his cigar. The report was excellently constructed. It was painstaking in its detail. It named names, places, times, events, and even recorded certain revealing conversations. It gave the background of each of Mrs. Christy's lovers, even down to their income and place of birth.

It was a marvelous document, in Monk's estimation, and not the first of its kind

he had had prepared. A powerful piece of persuasion.

With great satisfaction, he replaced the volume in an envelope and buzzed for Garcia. His instructions to the assistant were crisp and definite. The assignment was the kind that Garcia both understood and relished. He took the report from Monk's hands and went on his way to call on the lady in question.

Bill Christy, recently returned from a Mars flight, was both amazed and disturbed by the strange request his beautiful young wife made of him. It was awful—illegal—even criminal! To arrange for the certification of a man with a weak heart; to virtually counterfeit the medical records of the Spacelane Company!

But he *was* her uncle, Diana Christy pleaded. The only relative she had in the world; the only one she loved outside of Christy himself. He *must* help her; he must give her poor sick uncle a chance to make a new life for himself in the Mars Colony.

He wouldn't do it; he couldn't! But she cried, with great wet tears streaming down the smooth planes of her face. Didn't he love her? Wasn't this one little favor worth doing for the sake of her happiness? No one would be hurt by it. The motives were altruistic, after all.

But the risk—

There wasn't any risk, she assured him. Her uncle was wealthy; very wealthy. He could supply all the money Bill would need. If what people said about Dr. Forsch was true, he might be approached. That would make it simple, wouldn't it? It was such a small thing he could do—but how she would appreciate it! How she would love him for it!

And of course, finally, with her cool arms about his neck and her soft cheek pressed against his, he replied:

"I'll do it."



Monk handed his luggage to the official at the Spacelane Flight Desk. But he kept the brown leather bag in his hand, and no amount of argument could separate him from it. It was easy to understand his devotion to this particular

piece of personal property; it contained some four million dollars in cash.

"I may not be the youngest man on Mars," he smiled to himself as he walked onto the loading platform. "But I'll be the richest!"

Aboard the ship, the pilot Bill Christy gave him a worried glance and assisted him into the contour chair. Christy showed concern.

"You feel okay, Mr. Wheeler?" he asked. Monk smiled back, but not in answer to the question. He enjoyed the pseudonym, because it was the name of an old competitor, long-since buried beneath Monk's superior talents in the business of making money.

"Try and relax as much as you can," said Christy. "We'll give you a mild sedative before blast-off. Remember, there are going to be distinct variations in the G forces as we accelerate, so try to remember the breathing instructions."

"I will," said Monk. "Once more, though—"

"There'll be a steady buildup of acceleration for about ninety seconds. We'll go rapidly from zero gravity to nine. Breathe deeply and regularly on the way up. Then, when you feel a normal amount of pressure, hold your breath. Don't let it out until you feel the G forces increase again."

"I understand," Monk nodded.

"We'll get up to a peak of 8 G's, and hold that for about two minutes. Do the same thing—hold your breath when we start accelerating once more. It'll be easy after that."



The pilot made a final check of Monk's G suit and straps. Then he clapped the industrialist on the shoulder and strode off.

Twenty minutes later, when they were ready for blast-off, a warning bell sounded throughout the ship.

With a deafening roar of its rocket motors, the great vessel lifted itself laboriously from the ground, squatting on flame, filling Fletcher Monk's mind with the first real sense of fear since he learned the grim facts of his ailment in

Rostov's office.

Then the acceleration began, and in less than a minute, Monk knew a taste of Hell.

His vision blurred as the crushing force of naked speed pasted him against the contour seat. Consciousness began to leave him, but not soon enough. For there, in the tortured imaginings of his pain-constricted brain, came the ugly black bird again, shrieking horribly and perching itself on his chest. Its huge claws raked his ribs, and its dripping beak fastened itself on his throat. Now he recognized the species for what it was: a vulture, a bird of prey, unwilling to be robbed of its Earth victim; trying to pinion him to the planet with the strength of its anger. Its great wings flapped, flapped, flapped, beating against his body, flooding it with unrelieved anguish—

Then Monk gasped.

Gone! The bird was gone! A moment's peace, a moment's peace, a moment's freedom from torment—

No! The vulture returned, bent on its evil purpose. It wouldn't be denied; it raked its razor-sharp claws across Monk's shoulder; dug its beak into his chest; flapping, flapping—

Fletcher Monk screamed.



He opened his eyes, admitted a rush of clean air gratefully into his lungs.

"It's a miracle," said Bill Christy. "Nothing more. You were in a bad way, Mr. Wheeler, but you'll be okay now."

"Thank you, thank you!" panted Fletcher Monk.

"We're well on our way now. We'll reach the Big Bird in a matter of minutes—"

"The Big Bird?" said Monk in horror.

Christy smiled. "That's what we call the Space Station. We'll pick up some supplies and fuel there, and then we'll take off again. But you won't have to be concerned about the acceleration on the second blast-off. You can take that

easily."

"Are you sure?" said Monk anxiously.

"Positive. There won't be any gravitational pull to overcome this time. You'll be fine."

"I appreciate this, Christy. I won't forget your help."

"That's okay, Mr. Wheeler. It makes my wife happy."

"Yes." Monk felt well enough now to give the pilot a sardonic smile. "She's a wonderful girl, Diana. A wonderful girl."

"You're telling me?" said Bill Christy.



The space suit that Fletcher Monk had been assigned before the descent on Mars was a little tight-fitting for his comfort. He wondered what life would be like in this eternal bulky costume. But he was comforted by the picture of the Mars Colony he had received back on Earth; a labyrinth of airtight interiors, burrowing their way over and into the planet, served by gigantic oxygen tanks. The network of buildings had been expanding every year, until now it covered some hundred miles of the planet's surface. He'd spend most of his time safely indoors, he promised himself, where he wouldn't need the cumbersome trappings of space clothing. His life had been an indoor affair anyway, back on Earth.

The passengers were led into the Quarantine Section, where they would spend their first three days on Mars.

It was a relief to Monk to shed the heavy space-suit in the air-filled room. And it was a revelation, for with helmet and boots removed, he found himself almost floating with each step he took, moving feather-light over the ground. He was surprised, and a little unnerved at first, but then he remembered that this feeble gravitation was the preserver of his health—and he laughed aloud.

"Something funny?" said the man at the front desk. He was a young man, about thirty, but there was an ageless competence in his features.

Monk smiled. "Just feeling good, that's all." He patted the brown leather bag in

his hand.

"Name?"

"Well, it will be listed as Wheeler...."

The official scanned the list. "Here it is. Ben Wheeler." He looked up at Monk curiously. "How old are you, Mr. Wheeler?"

"Fifty," said Monk.

"Pretty old for the Colony, aren't you, Mr. Wheeler?"

Monk smirked. "The first thing we have to do is get rid of that Wheeler business, young man. My name is Monk. Fletcher Monk."

The official looked puzzled. "I don't get it. Why the phoney name?"

"I used an alias for reasons of my own. Now I'm telling you my real name. Monk."

The man shrugged and wrote something on the manifest.

"I don't expect you to cheer," said Monk sarcastically. "But you could show some reaction."

"What does that mean?"

Monk flushed. "Don't tell me you've never heard of me. I'm *Fletcher Monk*. I own half of this place."

"So?"

"What do you mean 'so?' My firm controls thirty percent of the mineral rights of the Colony. We ship you practically all of your Earth supplies. We can buy or sell this place at the drop of a quotation!"

"Listen, bud." The young man seemed annoyed. "If you're trying to impress me, forget it. And if you're threatening my job, you can take it!"

"Insolence!" Monk raged. "Who's your commanding officer? I want to see him right away!"

"My pleasure," the official grinned. "Hey, Gregorio!" he called to the man at the desk behind him. "Call Captain Moore. Gentleman here wants a word with him."

Monk took a seat while the other passengers went through the initial formalities. He sat there, fuming, until a tall man with an untrimmed beard entered the room. He took off his helmet and spoke briefly to the young man at the front desk, then looked over at Monk and came to his side.

"Mr. Monk?" he said. "I'm Captain Moore."

"Nice to meet you, Captain. I've just had a little conversation with your official greeter." He smiled, man-to-man. "Not a very friendly chap."

"We forget a lot about manners up here," said the captain, not smiling back. "We're kept pretty busy."

"I realize that, of course," said the industrialist. "But I would expect a little common courtesy—"

"You'll *earn* the right to courtesy out here, Mr. Monk," the captain snapped. "The Mars Colony lives on labor, and that's our first consideration. Courtesy comes about last on our list. We're in a battle here, twenty-four hours and thirty-seven minutes a day. We've got to fight to keep alive, and we've got to wrestle with a whole new planet if we want to unearth its secrets. Courtesy is a distinct privilege on Mars, Mr. Monk."

Monk bristled. "I don't quite get your meaning, Captain," he said indignantly. "But don't expect to pull rank or a holy attitude on me. In case you didn't realize it, I'm in a position to exert a great deal of influence over your little colony—and don't think I won't use it!"

The captain shrugged. "Use it," he said. "Go on. See if your influence really holds up here. Remember, Mr. Monk—you came to us of your own volition, and you can always turn around and go back."

"Impossible," said Monk, blanching. "I'm going to live here—for good."

"Then you'll have to adjust to *our* way," said the captain grimly. "You'll have to learn our way of doing things and cooperate a hundred percent. And the first thing you'll have to do is take a work assignment—"

"Work?" Monk gasped. "Why should I? You can't force me to work for you—"

"Remember Captain John Smith, Mr. Monk? He said the same thing to his colonists that I'm going to say to you now. If you don't work—you don't eat."

"But what could I do? I'm no scientist. I'm no—"

"There's plenty to do," the captain interrupted. "And most of it is dirty, physical labor. We have a thousand minerologists, chemists, geologists, botanists, physicists, meteorologists, and a lot more technical people at work on this planet. They can use all the help they can get. Don't worry about that!"

"But I'm *Fletcher Monk!*" the industrialist said. "I won't go grubbing around this filthy place! You can't enslave me like some chain-gang prisoner—"

"You'll do what you have to do," said the captain, "and you'll probably even like it. There's a wonderland outside this door," he said enthusiastically. "A crazy, wild, improbable wonderland, where we never see a rain-fall, where the plants grow scarlet, and clouds chase you down the street! We're uncovering marvelous things here. We have to fight and sometimes die to do it, but frankly, we enjoy the work."

He gave Monk his first smile. "Nobody's a prisoner on Mars, Mr. Monk. We're all volunteers."

He started to leave, but Monk stopped him.

"Wait," he said, licking his lips. "I have one more thing to say." He lowered his voice. "I can make a deal with you, Captain. A deal like you never had in your whole life." He patted the brown leather bag. "Name your price," he said. "And don't be shy about the figure."

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I'm talking about, Mr. Moore. Money. Real, hard, Earth dollars. Just name the amount it would take to buy a few small creature comforts around this place—and the right to live my own life."

"You can't buy your way out of working, mister—"



"Don't give me that! You'll sing a different tune when I tell you how much is in this bag. All you have to do is quote a figure—and it's yours!"

"Sorry, Mr. Monk," said the captain tersely.

"What do you mean by *sorry*?"

"I'm on a lifetime assignment here, and so are practically all the members of the Colony. It's a job that can barely be completed in a lifetime. And the economy we operate under doesn't call for money. Your dollars are so much excess baggage on Mars."

"What are you talking about?" Monk rasped. "I'm offering you a fortune. Money is money, you fool!"

"You can paper the walls of your quarters with it," said the officer sharply. "See if it helps keep out the Martian cold. That's about all the usefulness it has up here."

Wildly, Fletcher Monk unlocked the bag and dipped inside. His hand came out with a fistfull of green bills. "Look!" he cried. "I'm not joking about this! Look at it! Doesn't the sight of it mean anything to you?"

"It brings back some memories," said the captain smiling. "That's about all. Now you better go back to the desk and get your quarantine instructions."

He saluted the industrialist casually, and turned away.

"Okay, Mr. Moneybags," said the young official as the captain left. "Let's get acquainted."



A year later, Captain Harlan Moore presided at the dedication of the first fully-equipped hospital erected on the planet Mars. It was an impressive affair, despite the fact that it took place in a small, crowded chamber, and that the attending assemblage were still begrimed by their day's work.

When the ceremonies were completed, Captain Moore made an inspection of the new medical center, and one of his first stops was the bed-side of Fletcher Monk.

"We knew he wasn't a well man," said the young physician who stood by the

bed, taking Monk's pulse. He watched as the captain picked up the chart hooked to the edge of the bed.

"Yes," said Moore. "He was a very sick man when he first came to the Colony. In more ways than one," he added.

The doctor looked perplexed. "But this illness still surprises me," he said. "I've examined him almost monthly for the past year, and frankly, I would have bet on his survival. He began to improve rapidly—physically, anyway. It might have been the lesser gravity, or the healthier life." He looked at the captain curiously. "Yet he wasn't assigned to any over-strenuous duties?"

"You know he wasn't," said the captain. "We don't want anybody to undertake work they can't handle. His labor was hardly physical. He worked in the geological and botanical groups, but not in the field. He did classifying and clerical work."

"Then that wouldn't account for the trouble—"

"Perhaps it does, in a way," The captain bent over the puffy, chalk-white face of the industrialist, listening to his shallow breathing. "He was never happy doing it. He had different ideas about himself than we did. He never understood what we were doing or why."

"It's the greatest mystery of them all," said the physician, shaking his head.

"What is?"

"The human body. It's incredible how much we've learned about the physical world, and even the physical features of our own construction. But there's still a mystery we haven't penetrated—"

The captain smiled. "That doesn't sound like you."

"I know," the young physician answered. "But when I see a case like this—a man breathing his life away for a reason I really can't understand—" The doctor rubbed the back of his head. "I know it's crazy, and old-fashioned, and doesn't make the least bit of sense in these scientific times, Captain. But if anyone were to ask me—off the record, and completely unofficially—I could only give them one honest diagnosis of this case. I think this man is dying of a broken heart."

THE END

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