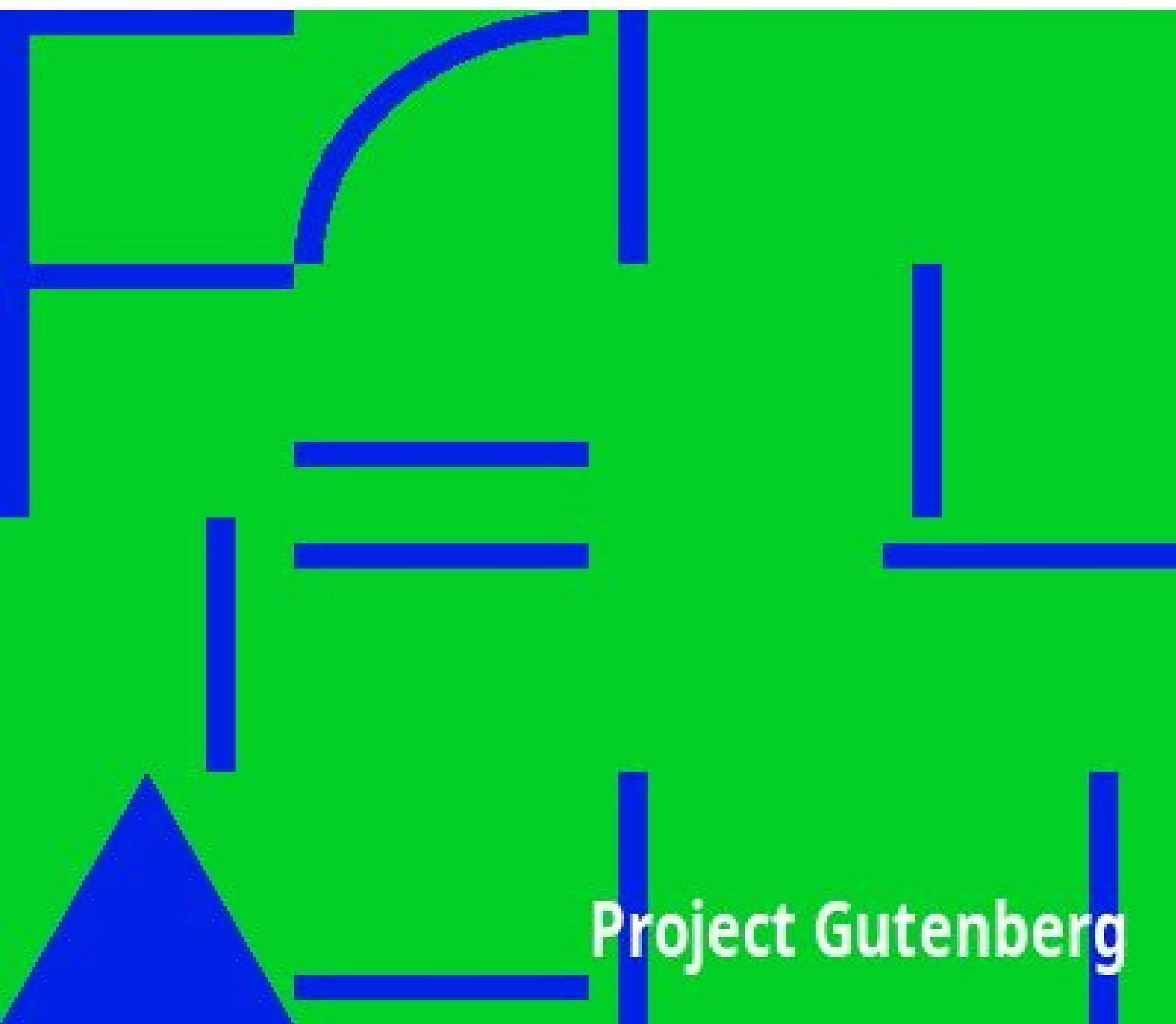


# Out of the Earth

George Edrich



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*This is not a story about the Dero! This is a story about a lost people—a persuasive and haunting story about a people, in a not too distant future, who have been forgotten by history. And it is the story of a little group of courageous people, determined to prove that Death was a Myth!*

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**out  
of  
the  
earth**

by *GEORGE EDRICH*

**Offences against the State meant elimination in the Black Passage. Death. And these people were to die!**

First Awake, 2 Juli, 2207

WE HAVE walked much this awake and have stopped now for sleep. Last City is far behind us. Except for the two lamps we keep lighted to frighten away the Groles, there is nothing but blackness in the passage. The others are sleeping, and close beside me, Nina sleeps also. The sound of her breathing is all I have in the darkness.

Thoughts are not clear when the body is so tired, and the things that have happened seem unreal, like something dreamed. The arrest—the State Guards in their black uniforms—coming to our cubicle in the middle of the sleep hours—frightening Nina.

Ten awakes and sleeps of not knowing why. Then the trial—"Jon Farmer 8267, we show you a copy of *The Mushroom Farmers' Journal* of 21 January 2204. We call your attention to the article *Experiments With Red Lake Mushrooms in Rock Soil*. This article discusses with favor some policies of the Dictatorium of President Charles 27, an Enemy of the State. Do you admit to writing this treason?"

You are not permitted to answer the Judges in a State trial because they know the answers to everything they ask you. But while they were talking together, I thought how different things became with time. I remembered the fine letter from the Secretary of Agriculture of the Dictatorium, and the two extra free days they had given me. But there was a new Dictatorium now. President Charles and General William had been lowered into Copper Pit and metallized. Now they were mounted in the Historical Museum in Central City. The others of the Dictatorium had been eliminated in Black Passage.

"—Jon Farmer 8267. You have written with favor about Enemies of the State. You are therefore yourself declared an Enemy of the State. By order of the Supreme Council of the Dictatorium of President Joseph 28, you are hereby sentenced to elimination in Black Passage."

Then Nina—"Nina Farmerswife 8267, you have mated with an Enemy of the State. By condescension of the Supreme Council of the Dictatorium of President Joseph 28, you are to be permitted to take an oath of renunciation and separation."

It is not too difficult for the heart to be strong when there is no decision for the mind to make. But what strength of heart Nina must have had then. I was terribly proud and terribly frightened when she walked over and stood with me.

"Please, Nina—" I said, but she shook her head, and her eyes told me I could say nothing more.

The Judges were angry. "Nina Farmerswife 8267, you are hereby declared an Enemy of the State. By order of ..."

There was no one else in the guard cubicle when they locked us in. When the May trials were over, five awakes later, there were seven of us. Doctor Dorn 394 was brought in the awake after we were. He had read the forbidden books in the Chambers of the Dead at the Historical Museum. He was almost thirty-five years old, and had been third assistant physician to the Supreme Council. This was a very strong office and only something as terrible as reading the forbidden books could have made him an Enemy of the State.

Ralf Fishcatcher and his wife, Mari, came from Red Lake. They were Enemies of the State because they had not reported all of the fish they had caught.

Except for Nina, the youngest one of us was Theodor Cook 3044. He was very frightened. He told how he had stolen mushroom bread from the Central City Ration Station where he worked, and how his wife had reported him so she wouldn't become an Enemy of the State also.

The last one to be brought in was Bruno Oreminer 2139. He had killed his

foreman by hitting him in the head with a rock. He was a very big man, and very strong. But he talked very little and there was a cold and dangerous look in his eyes.

Early on the sixth awake, the guards came for us. The march was long, almost seven awakes. We passed through many cities—Big City, Power City, and Red Lake; then Iron City, Deep Pit, and Last City. There was only a ten-lamp-per-mile passage from Big Pit to Last City. We passed few people. At Last City, we were taken to the State Guard Station and given small shoulder packs with the food, water, and lamps the law says we may have.

Out of Last City the passage was narrow and poorly lighted, only five lamps per mile. After a few miles the guards became silent, and then just up ahead we saw what looked like a solid iron wall. We had come to the gate to Black Passage.

One of the guards took a paper from his pocket and read it very quickly so that it was hard to understand most of the words. But every little while we could hear "Enemies of the State." When he finished reading, all three of the guards put their fingers in some notches in the gate and pulled with all their strength, and the gate slid into the side of the wall.

Black Passage was before us!

Mari Fishcatcherswife gave a little scream, and Nina pressed up against me and held my arm tightly. Lying on the floor of the passage were many dead bones.

The guard who had read the paper said we must now go into Black Passage. For a long time no one moved. It is hard to be the first into a darkness where, no matter how far the eye searches, there is not the faintest light. Then Doctor Dorn struck the flint on his oil lamp and walked through the gate. With the light of his lamp ahead of us, the fear became less and we turned on our own lamps and followed after him.

The iron wall slid closed behind us. We could hear the steps of the guards as they walked back toward Last City. After a while we couldn't hear them any longer.

Bruno Oreminer tried to move the gate, but the iron was smooth on this side and nothing happened. Theodor Cook had put his face in his hands so he would

not have to look at the dead bones, but he stepped on one, and when it cracked, he gave a little cry.

Doctor Dorn started to walk down the passage. I took Nina's hand and we followed after him. It would do no good to stay there by the gate which would never again open for us. If we remained, we would just become dead bones like the rest. The others came along a little way behind.

After we had walked through the passage far enough away from the dead bones so we could not see them, Doctor Dorn stopped. He said we should rest awhile and eat a little of the food, and then we would talk.

Theodor Cook was the first one to ask him the question we were all thinking about. "When will we die?" he asked.

Doctor Dorn said he didn't know. The food and water we had been given was supposed to last for ten awakes and sleeps. If we were very, very careful, it might last for much longer. The oil would probably become used up first, and when there was no more light, then probably the Groles would get us.

Theodor asked whether the dead bones we had seen were people who had been killed by the Groles.

Doctor Dorn said he didn't know, but he didn't think so. When the Groles found someone, there were not supposed to be even dead bones left. No one had ever seen a Grole because they came only when there was no light at all.

Doctor Dorn said he was sorry he had to say such frightening things. But he wanted us to know and understand the worst before he told us things that might give us hope.

There was the smallest chance, Doctor Dorn said, that Black Passage might go to some other State where there was life, the way Copper Passage from Deep City went to the State of the Savages. Our hope was terribly small though, because even if the passage did go to such a place, it would probably be many more awakes and sleeps away than we had oil for; and also, the life there might be wild the way it was in the State of the Savages.

It is strange though how even a hope so small as to be almost nothing can give new strength to the heart.

Doctor Dorn talked more, telling us how we would have to learn to live with

less and less light so that the oil would last as long as possible. In the beginning we would burn four lamps. Because the passage was not wide enough for more than two people to walk together, one of us would have to walk alone. But whoever walked alone would always carry one of the lighted lamps, and would never be first or last. When we became used to four lamps, we would turn one off and try walking with only three. After a while another lamp would be turned off and only two lamps would be kept lighted, one at the beginning and one at the end of the column. During sleeps we would keep two lamps on. One would be enough to frighten away the Groles, but there was always the danger it might go out, so it was safer to use two.

Theodor asked wouldn't we get the Black Fear, with so little light.

Doctor Dorn said he didn't know. It was to prevent the Black Fear that we would turn off the lamps gradually instead of all at once. But anyway, it was better to get the Black Fear for a few hours than to use up all of the oil and have the Groles come.

When we started walking again, Doctor Dorn and Bruno went first, then Ralf and Mari, then Theodor. Nina and I walked last. It is frightening to be last with the blackness behind. Later, we will have a different position, and others will take our place.

We have walked for many hours. Now we have stopped for sleep and only the two guard lamps are burning. The light they make is hardly enough to write by. When I look up and see the terrible blackness in the passage before and behind us, a strange and awful feeling seems to form inside. This may be the beginning of Black Fear. I think it is better that I stop writing now. I want to hold Nina in my arms and sleep with the warmth of her life close to me.

Second Awake, 3 Juli 2207

Since last sleep, the hours have been slow and the walk long, but Black Passage remains the same. Doctor Dorn thinks there may be no change for many awakes and sleeps.

To walk in silence except for the sound of our steps becomes a fearsome thing, so we talk much. Doctor Dorn tells us interesting things that have happened



while he was Physician to the Supreme Council. When he does this, we do not think so much of what may be ahead for us.

There is something of a strangeness about Bruno, the ore-miner who killed his foreman. Although he rests when we rest, and sleeps when we sleep, the feeling comes that he is not with us. He walks always first with Doctor Dorn, and says nothing.

Sometimes Mari and Nina walk together and talk about woman things. Mari is twenty-two, three years older than Nina, and even though she has been married to Ralf for only five years, she has almost borne life once. Nina said it must be wonderful to bear life, and Doctor Dorn heard her and said she had the look of one who might bear life herself some day, perhaps even before she was twenty-five. Nina was very thrilled.

But it is strange to talk of a time so far ahead. The mind forgets sometimes there may be only a few awakes and sleeps left to all our lives.

One feels a great sorrow for Theodor. He does not have someone who is a part of him the way I have Nina and Ralf has Mari, and he does not have the strength of heart of Doctor Dorn or Bruno. Fear seems to hold his mind more than any of us. Many times Nina or Mari, or Ralf or I, walk beside him so he will not have to walk alone always. But when we speak to him he almost never answers.

Third Awake, 4 Juli 2207

Another sleep has come and our tiredness is greater. Doctor Dorn thinks we are about twenty-five miles from Lost City.

After an hour of the walk, we turned off one of the lamps, leaving only three on, and the blackness of the passage seemed to jump in toward us. It is like a live and evil thing, the blackness, running in fear from the light before us, yet following so closely behind. Sometimes I cannot help feeling that, like the Groles, it is just waiting for our last lamp to go out so it can rush in and kill us. In one thing we have been fortunate. Even with only three lamps lighted no one has had the Black Fear. But after this sleep we will burn only two lamps and again the blackness will move closer. It is not a pleasant thought to sleep with.

#### Fourth Awake, 5 Juli 2207

Except for the greater darkness because of only two lamps, all is the same. It is strange not to have the City Signals to tell us when to sleep and when to awake. Because we have only our tiredness to measure awakes and sleeps, I am no longer sure the date I write above is the right one.

We do not talk as much now. All of our strength must be used for walking.

#### Fifth Awake, 6 Juli 2207

One of the lamps went out while we were walking, this awake. Although we were able to light it again in a few seconds, we could not help thinking how the Groles might have come if the other lamp hadn't been burning.

Doctor Dorn says our tiredness is so great because we eat so little of the food. It is very hard to be careful when one remains so hungry; yet not knowing how many days are before us in Black Passage makes the mind fearful and the will strong.

#### Seventh Awake, 8 Juli 2207

This awake, Theodor had the Black Fear. We had to hold one of the lamps in front of his eyes for more than an hour before he was able to stop trembling. Then it was almost another hour before he was able to go on.

#### Eleventh Awake, 12 Juli 2207

Sleep follows sleep and nothing changes. Sometimes I feel that we have not moved at all, that we are still just outside Last City. Yet Doctor Dorn says we have come almost one hundred miles.

Twelfth Awake, 13 Juli 2207

Just before this sleep we emptied our shoulder packs to see how much food and water we have used. Most of us have used about one-fourth of what we have been given. Doctor Dorn says this is not bad, but we must learn to use even less. Theodor has much more food left than any of us. This is not surprising, because during rests he eats almost nothing.

It is the little oil we have left that worries Doctor Dorn. He does not believe there will be enough for even ten more awakes and sleeps. We would use less oil if we burned only one lamp, but it would be a terrible chance. We remember how a lamp went out several awakes ago.

Fourteenth Awake, 15 Juli 2207

There was much trouble during our last sleep. Soon after sleep had come, a terrible cry awoke us again. My mind first had the thought that the lamps had gone out and the Groles had come. But both lamps were still burning, and near one of them, we could see Bruno and Theodor struggling together on the floor of the passage. Bruno's hands were around Theodor's throat, and Theodor was no longer able to make any sounds. Bruno is terribly strong, and Ralf and I and Doctor Dorn had to use all of our own strength to force his hands away. Doctor Dorn asked Bruno why he had done this, and Bruno pointed to where his shoulder pack was lying open, and said, "He was stealing." These were the only words he had said for a long time. When Theodor stopped choking and was able to speak again, Doctor Dorn asked him if what Bruno had said was true. Theodor said no, and Doctor Dorn said he should look directly into his eyes and answer again. Theodor said he was sleepy and his throat hurt and he didn't want to talk any more. Doctor Dorn gave a big sigh, and said he understood. He said Theodor must promise never to steal again. If he didn't promise, or if he broke his promise, then perhaps the next time Bruno tried to kill him, we might not hear him in time. Theodor became very frightened, and said all right, he promised.

When we were going back to sleep, Nina told me she had wondered why Theodor slept each time near someone else. He had probably thought by taking a

little from each one of us, his stealing would not be noticed.

Seventeenth Awake, 18 Juli 2207

The awakes and sleeps pass again and everything is as it was, except that our food and oil becomes less, and our tiredness greater. Several times during our walk we have found a little water in the passage. How wonderful it would be if we could so easily find more food and oil.

Although Bruno shows no sign that he wants to hurt Theodor again, Theodor is still terribly frightened of him, and stays as far from him as possible. Before each sleep, Doctor Dorn makes Theodor open his shoulder pack and show him the food he has left. His food is being used up as fast as ours is now.

Eighteenth Awake, 19 Juli 2207

Eighteen awakes and sleeps we have walked in Black Passage. To the mind, it is forever.

The passage has begun to climb a little. This is not a good thing.

Nineteenth Awake, 20 Juli 2207

I write this during rest.

We have come to a Dead City. No lamps are lighted in the dark street passages and all the cubicles are empty. We have found many other passages going out of the City, and we must now decide which is the best to try. I do not think this will be difficult. One of the passages seems newer than any of the others, much newer and larger than Black Passage through which we have walked for so long. There are lamps in this passage, and even though they are not lighted, they would not have been put there unless the passage went to some other City. Although this other city may be dead also, hope is now a little greater. Doctor

Dorn calls this passage Hope Passage. Another thing that adds to hope is the way the passage goes down so steeply.

Hope Passage was found many hours ago, sleep time has now come, and yet a decision has not been made. Much of this is because of Nina. Although she has spoken very little, the things she has said have made Doctor Dorn behave very strangely.

When he asked each of us if we thought Hope Passage would be the best one to follow, everyone but Nina said yes right away. Even Bruno nodded. But when he asked Nina, she did not answer so quickly. Then she said if we all thought Hope Passage was the best, it was probably so.

But Doctor Dorn was not satisfied. Did she not think so herself, he asked. Was there something about Hope Passage she did not like? Was there some other passage she thought might be better?

I could feel Nina's fingers tighten on my arm the way they did whenever she became very frightened or worried or disturbed. It was not something her mind thought, she said. It was just a feeling she had which she couldn't understand or explain.

Doctor Dorn's voice became very gentle. He said Nina shouldn't try to understand or explain her feeling. But would she try to describe what it was like, even a little.

Nina looked at me very troubled and I put my arm around her shoulders, and said she didn't have to answer if she didn't want to. But then she took a little breath and said in a very low voice that as far back as she could remember, even when she was a tiny girl, she always had a good feeling when she was going up and a bad feeling when she was going down. It was a strange way to be, she knew, and she had never told anyone before. But that was why she did not like Hope Passage, which went down so fast. The passage she had liked best was the one near the old statue. The way it went up gave her a good feeling.

Doctor Dorn asked didn't she know the passage by the statue was the oldest one we had found, and therefore it should have the smallest chance of going to a live city.

Nina said she knew, and her mind understood everything Doctor Dorn said. But the things her mind knew and understood were not able to change the way

she felt. She said she was sorry she had made us all lose so much time. She would not talk about it any more.

Doctor Dorn asked Nina would she please answer just one more question. Did she have this good feeling while we were walking up the little climb near the end of Black Passage.

Nina nodded her head yes, and Doctor Dorn said it was very interesting. Then in a different voice, he said that Hope Passage was our best chance of finding life, and after this sleep we would continue our walk there.

Twentieth Awake, 21 Juli 2207

A few hours ago we said goodbye to Ralf and Mari and Bruno, and watched them start down Hope Passage. I think they may find life again soon.

Even now, I do not understand clearly why we are not with them; why we are climbing in this old rough passage which rises so steeply we must stop every little while to rest.

Many thoughts must have come to Doctor Dorn during our last sleep, because when we awoke he was different from any way he had been before. For a little while, he just walked up and back rubbing his chin as if he were thinking very hard. Then all of a sudden he stopped and came over to Nina. He asked Nina whether if we were not here, if she had to decide only for herself, knowing all he had told her, would she still take the old passage?

Nina said yes, she would. Doctor Dorn sat down. He said he was going to say strong words. He was going to tell us some of the things he had read in the Forbidden Books.

For thousands of years Man had first lived on Earth Surface, the books said. But then great wars had come and Man had studied hard and learned ways to kill each other millions at a time. But some of the men who did not want to die had dug deep into the earth to live. Everyone in the earth, the books said, came from these first men from Earth Surface.

Doctor Dorn stopped to let us think about what he had told us. *Earth Surface*—nothing above but nothing—and nothing beyond nothing—the thought is

more than the mind can hold. That men could have lived on such a place is too much to be believed.

There were some things written in the Forbidden Books that could not be true, Doctor Dorn said, like the plants called trees that grew to be many times taller than a man; or lakes called oceans that were larger than a thousand Red Lakes together. But even though these and some other things the books said were not possible, there was something about the story of men living on Earth Surface that made him wonder. All sleep he had not slept, but had thought how the old passage we had found near the statue might be one of the surface passages the books told about. He could not imagine any City in the Earth building a passage so steep and so rough.

Doctor Dorn stopped talking for a moment, and he looked at me. He seemed very excited. "Jon," he said, "my own feeling now is to take Surface Passage. I cannot do this alone with one lamp. You know how Nina feels. Will you and Nina come with me?"

My thoughts must have been like those of the lost-mind men in the hospital at Central City. Even now I do not know why I said we would. Maybe it was because of the way Nina's eyes shone when Doctor Dorn talked about Earth Surface. Nina is a wonderful girl and I love her very much, but sometimes I think I do not understand her completely.

Ralf and Mari talked together for a long time. Then Ralf told Doctor Dorn he thought Hope Passage was the best chance for finding life. They would not come with us.

Doctor Dorn said he understood. He was sorry we had to separate now, but each must do what was in his own thoughts and heart. Then he asked Bruno if he was coming with us, and Bruno shook his head no, and did not say anything.

Theodor thought for even a longer time than Ralf and Mari. He kept biting the nails on his fingers and every little while his eyes would look at Bruno. I knew he was afraid to come with us; but also he was afraid to be alone with Bruno with only Ralf to help him if anything happened. Finally, in a very low voice, he said he would come with us.

Doctor Dorn said fine, now there was one more thing we must do before we started. We must take the oil from one of the lamps and put it in the other six lamps so there would be the same amount in each one. Then each group would

take three lamps.

Theodor said this was not fair. There were four of us so we should have four lamps. Doctor Dorn said four people needed no more light than three people.

It was very sad when we had to separate. Mari and Nina cried a little. For a long time after we found Surface Passage and were climbing in it, no one said anything. Perhaps after next sleep, our sadness may be less.

Twenty-First Awake, 22 Juli 2207

The passage is still climbing and we rest often. I write a little during some of our rests.

There is very little oil left. Doctor Dorn says we must take a dangerous chance. No lamp has gone out for a long time. If we burn only one lamp, we can have light for almost four more awakes and sleeps. If this is really a Surface Passage, and if what is written in the forbidden books is true, this time may be enough for us to reach Earth Surface.

We have been burning only one lamp since our last rest. How bright does the light from the two lamps seem now. Nina says she feels she can reach out and touch the blackness.

Theodor is very frightened. Over and over he says we must go back and take the other passage, that if we go on we shall all be dead bones. I think Doctor Dorn would become angry if he did not understand how frightened Theodor is.

During rest, Theodor spoke words that made Nina feel very sad. He said it was because of her that we would all die. I became very angry, and told him if he said anything like that again, I would finish what Bruno had started. He knows I would not do this, but now he talks very little.



Twenty-Second Awake, 23 Juli 2207

We walk up Surface Passage still, but there is a difference. Before last sleep there was much hope in our hearts. Now our hope is almost nothing.

It was Nina who knew first. She brought me out of sleep, shaking my shoulder and saying my name, until my mind was awake enough to understand.

Theodor was gone!

He had left us the one lamp that was burning. The other two lamps he had taken; and all of our food and water. But our hunger may never become too great. With one lamp, there will be light until only a few hours after next sleep.

Doctor Dorn blames himself. He says he should have been able to tell that Theodor might do something like this. But Doctor Dorn feels the same tiredness that is in us all, making our thoughts like shadows.

Sleep time has come, but we do not stop. We will walk on and rest when we must. When the end of life is so near, the will finds strength.

Twenty-Third Awake, 24 Juli 2207

We have walked through sleep and we have slept while we walked. The rise is steeper. Our oil lamp is still burning and our shadows fall behind us into the blackness. There will be light for perhaps ten more hours.

There is a dampness now in the passage, like that of the passage to Red Lake. Our tiredness is so great we become afraid sometimes that after one of our rests we may not be able to go on. I am worried about Nina. She says nothing, but I think for a long while now she has been walking on heart strength alone. We have seven hours of light before us.

The passage has ended. For a moment the thought came that we were on Earth Surface. But Doctor Dorn says we are in a great cavern, larger even than the Cavern of Red Lake. Our one light is as nothing in this great blackness, and we walk close to the wall so we will not become lost. In some places the walls are like glass as if from a very great heat. There are more passages in the sides of this cavern than the mind can imagine. But after this rest there is nothing else we

can do but try one of them.

For five hours we have been lost in passages that curve and turn and join with each other as madly as if they were made by lost-mind men. Now we have found our way back to the Great Cavern. We shall stay here the two hours longer our light and lives will last.

It is easier now that our hope is nothing.

We can rest and wait, and even our fear becomes less in our tiredness.

The time has gone slowly, but the light from the lamp is becoming less now. In a few seconds it will go out, and the Groles will come, and our lives will be over. Perhaps for an instant before we die, we shall know what the Groles are; or perhaps it happens so quickly we will never know anything. This may be the better way. Nina trembles in my arms.

We wait in the blackness. The lamp has been out for many minutes but the Groles have not come.

How can this be? Can the mind conceive that there are no such things as Groles, that, like so many other things, they are only a lie of the State?

These last words I write now.

The Groles are coming! We can hear their murmuring sounds through the passages. We say goodbye to each other.

They are very close now—very—

## ALVAREZ COUNTY DAILY RECORD

*Inhabitants of Earth's Interior Come to Alvarez*  
by Franklin Williams, Staff Writer

Alvarez, May 9, 2204.—An almost unbelievable event of the greatest significance not only to Alvarez, or the United States of the Western Hemisphere, but to the entire world, occurred in our Alvarez County yesterday. Visitors on the early morning tour through Alvarez Caverns, came upon an astonishing spectacle. Two men and a young girl of indescribable strangeness of

manner and dress were seated on the floor of Atom Cave. All were in the last stages of exhaustion and exposure, and even the little light from the electric hand lamps seemed to blind them. Fortunately, in the tour was Dr. and Mrs. Ferguson of New Washington, and Dr. Ferguson, appraising himself rapidly of the situation, led the trio out of the Caverns and drove them to Alvarez Hospital. Dr. Ferguson says they seemed completely dazed and unable to speak. They came with him without resistance.

After an examination by Dr. Stutfeldt of Alvarez Hospital which completely confirmed Dr. Ferguson's earlier diagnosis, the strange visitors were put in a darkened room, in which they surprisingly had no difficulty seeing, and were given simple nourishment.

Late in the evening, after they had slept and rested for many hours, they were questioned. In the presence of a distinguished group which included Mayor Whitehead, Professor Lorraine Johnson (a very charming young lady) of the Alvarez University, J. W. Wilson, Chairman of the Alvarez Chamber of Commerce, and your reporter, they told an amazing, but according to Professor Johnson, entirely credible story.

Speaking slowly with an accent strongly reminiscent of twenty-first century North American, but with somewhat peculiar grammatical formations, the oldest of the group told of their having walked for many weeks from their State deep within the Earth.

Undoubtedly, they will have much more of interest to tell, but Dr. Stutfeldt refused to let them talk for more than a few minutes. He says it will be many weeks before they will regain their strength, and much longer before they will be able to adjust to the tremendous differences between their old life and life on the surface of the earth. It is entirely possible, Dr. Stutfeldt says, that they may never be able to make this adjustment.

An interesting sidelight of their within-the-earth civilization is that, although they apparently have the same calendar system as ours, in some way their time seems to have gotten out of step. According to their reckoning it is now some three years and two months later than it is.

What's New Under the Sun  
by Dick Richard

The (very) little furor that has been caused by the recent report from Alvarez County of the arrival of visitors from inside the earth shows signs of abating completely. Very likely it is just a case of poor timing, (three reports of flying saucers and one of Saturnian birdmen in less than a month has pretty well saturated the gullibility market). But perhaps it is just as well. Not that we are skeptical by nature, but we cannot help wondering at the somewhat amazing coincidence of the Alvarez report being issued just two weeks before the start of the Alvarez County Festival.

*UNITED STATES OF THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE DEPARTMENT OF  
STATE DIVISION OF INVESTIGATION*

Report on Supernatural Phenomena: File No. B5138.

Subject: Subterranean Inhabitants.

Reference: Alvarez County Record, News Item of May 9, 2204, et al. (See File).

On January 3, 2206, in performance of the subject investigation, a visit was made to the Alvarez Hospital at Alvarez, Alvarez County. Dr. Ernest Stutfeldt was contacted, and upon being questioned, expressed surprise and some annoyance that an investigation was being conducted, in his words, "so damned long after everything was over." It was pointed out to Dr. Stutfeldt that qualified investigative personnel was limited, that these matters had to be taken in their proper turn, and that a year and a half interval for an investigation of this nature was not considered excessive. The information was then elicited from Dr. Stutfeldt that the "earth visitors" were no longer patients at the hospital, that two of them, a Mr. and Mrs. Jon Farmer, were living on their farm about ten miles out of Alvarez, and that the third, a Dr. Dorn Smith, was studying medicine at Alvarez University.

Transportation to the university was thereupon obtained, and after considerable time and difficulty, Dr. Dorn Smith was located. When asked for some proof of his subterranean origin, the doctor was unable to provide same. His descriptions of the life and government of his claimed underground "State" could with a little imagination, have been derived from any textbook on the

absolute governments of the twenty-first century.

A certain measure of authenticity was temporarily ascribed to Dr. Dorn Smith's statements, when these were termed as "entirely credible" by Professor Lorraine Johnson of the university. However, the explanation for Professor Johnson's corroboration became obvious when it was learned that the professor and Dr. Dorn Smith were engaged to be married.

Although it was apparent by this time that the claims made by the subject investigatees had no information in fact, in order to insure a completely comprehensive inquiry, a visit was made to the Farmers' domicile. Obviously alerted by a phonovision from Dr. Dorn Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Farmer were cordial, but no more informative than their three-month-old baby daughter. The inquiry was then terminated.

A verbatim account of all questions and answers pertaining to the above investigation is affixed hereto.

Therefore, and in consequence of this inquiry, it is recommended that the subject supernatural phenomenon be classified as "Not Verified," and that the file be closed.

Respectfully submitted,  
Clarence B. Pendergast,  
Special Investigator of Supernatural Phenomena

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
January 5, 2206.

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