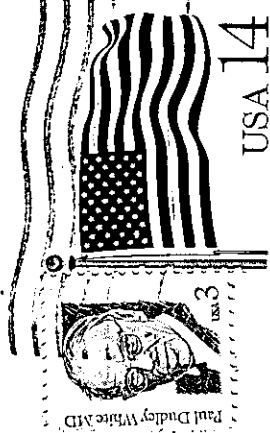


Jacqueline Lichtenberg
Vantage Point
8 Fox Lane
Spring Valley, NY 10977



Sydney Zierhut
1616 Spruce St
Winter Park, FL 32789

Anguel

6/8/88

Thanks for the update on the Autograph

+ Book of the Stars. Yes, I'd like to be involved.

I'm not clear on how payment + copyright
would be handled, but I'm no physicist steep
to other writers, writing my characters or using
my back ground. I've been saying that since,
I'll give a track to set Nisid can? I'd love to talk

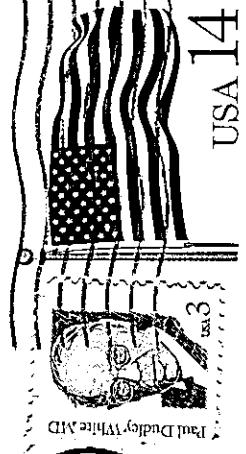
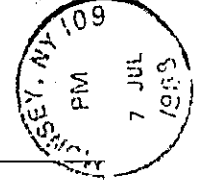
about this concept. At 1/2 price!

I'm trying to get 2 EO Rings a successful concept

all chief + no nations & no EXHAR decision about
letter or more. I suspect the experiment has some covering &
could be cross-national. I'm down to the experiment,

at 1/2 price Autograph + Book of the Stars

Jacqueline Lichtenberg
Vantage Point
8 Fox Lane
Spring Valley, NY 10977



Anche Horton
1600 Spruce Ave
Winter Park, FL 32789

Dean, Andrie -

7/7/88

Got your message. I meant to acknowledge receipt of the book but it's been MTD, MTD, MTD! I'm around here with the painters & electricians & masons. I'm in my way out of town now (again!)

So please excuse the lateness of this, but THANK YOU for the Book, that's the gift I've seen of it.

You ought to get all the WW contributors together at BOSTON for an autographing session in your honor next year, it would be a GREAT!

I'm guessing on the LEO story. I know what the Leo society would be like but I need to know more about the experimenters. I'd like to see your story for inspiration, or at least a few paragraphs on them, especially Dr. J's get to meet them & find out proper ~~information~~ ~~information~~

Jacqueline Lichtenberg
8 Fox Lane
Spring Valley, N.Y. 10977
October 4, 1989

Andre Norton
Ingrid Zierhut
1600 Spruce Ave.
Winter Park, Fl 32789

Dear Ingrid & Andre,

By now you should have the copy of TO STRIVE WITH GODS sent to you via agent Don Maass.

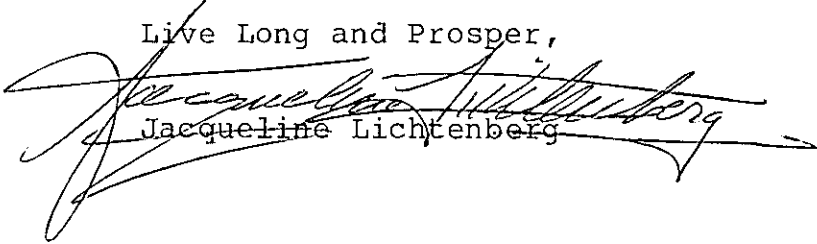
As you may surmise, this marks the rather sad and frustrating parting of the ways with Russell Galen. This one story was only one of the many frustrations that had built up this past year.

So, on this one project at least, Don Maass will be representing me.

Please let me know as soon as possible what sorts of rewrites you want on the story.

According to LOCUS, suddenly anthologies are picking up strength in the marketplace again, so this is a great time to be putting one out to market. I hope you have enough material to make a go of it by now, but if there's anything else I can do, please let me know.

Live Long and Prosper,


Jacqueline Lichtenberg

DONALD MAASS LITERARY AGENCY

64 West 84th Street · New York, N.Y. 10024 · (212) 877-6892

September 26, 1989

Ms. Ingrid Zierhut
1600 Spruce Ave.
Winter Park, FL 32789

Dear Ms. Zierhut:

Jacqueline Lichtenberg has asked me to forward to you her contribution to your anthology THE TOUCHSTONE STARS: "To Strive With Gods."

Although I will not formally be representing Jacqueline, now that she has parted from her previous agent, I have agreed to handle this one matter. Please send the agreement to Jacqueline c/o my agency.

Jacqueline adds that since she has not yet read any of the other stories, she will be happy to revise "To Stive With Gods." I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



DONALD MAASS

enc.

To Strive With Gods

1./

Jacqueline Lichtenberg
8 Fox Lane
Spring Valley, N.Y. 10977
914-356-4562

approx. 6,250 wds.

~~AGENT: Russell Galen
Scott Meredith Literary Agency, Inc.
845 Third Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10022
212-245-5500~~

To Strive With Gods

by

Jacqueline Lichtenberg

The rain beat down in stinging needles.

Alpha felt the flesh of her hands and face pressed deep into a soft, slimy substance. Mud. Well fertilized mud.

Lightning split the black sky and an instant later, cracked overhead and made her body jump. The rain wasn't cold, but there was a dank, heat-drinking chill to the wetness.

She levered herself up onto her elbows. Slowly, memory returned. She and Omega had materialized discreetly clad in human bodies, dressed in the local style, concealed in a densely grown corner of a formal garden. Before she could even take a breath of the cool night air and enjoy the senses of this body, the ground had heaved under her feet, something had hit her head, and the body's memory had ceased to record

though her own thoughts had raced.

Beside her, Omega grunted and heaved himself up from the sticky, smelly mud, swiping at his face with his filthy hands. She could barely make out his form against the encompassing blackness.

She said, "Omega, you made a mistake."

"A mistake may have been made," he replied pulling his knees under him, "but it wasn't I who made it. And if, as I suspect, it's a native who's erred, then you aren't going to find your definitive proof here."

"I'm not going to give up that easily. If any of the twelve types has the capacity to evolve more swiftly in isolation than in mixture, it'll be this one. These people are possessed of a love of independence as well as a love of their own kind, and with their warmth, compassion and generosity they attract more love than they give."

"Only in the highly evolved state," he cautioned. "The youthful souls love themselves more than others and lust for reward without earning it. And these are youths. Though all youths go through an egotistical phase, these will no doubt exhibit more conceit than you have ever imagined."

"You've given this a great deal of thought."

"And so have you. Love is an essential condition for spiritual evolution, but it isn't a sufficient condition."

"Who's there?" called a woman's voice.

"A native already," observed Alpha. "Now we'll see. Remember, we agreed to go unnoticed here."

"I remember. Be sure you act just like one of them." Omega started to get up. He ran into an obstacle and settled back to all fours to inspect the overhang. It was a tree limb, invisible in the darkness but perceptible to Ylembric senses. "A tree fell on us," he commented mildly.

Now that her attention had been drawn to it, Alpha observed the canted tree trunk above them. It must have been falling while they materialized and it was just luck it hadn't crushed their bodies. That might have been inconvenient.

"Iver? Is that you?" The woman called again. Her tone demanded information, but there was no panic in it. Her aura throbbled with overtones of concern on a dozen levels and suddenly Alpha was immensely curious.

Omega carefully backed up toward the voice and the clearer space, where he rose, answering, "My name is not Iver, nor is my companion's - " As lightning flashed, his voice trailed off into an inarticulate sound compounded of surprise and awe.

Alpha hastily disentangled herself from vines and foliage, broke off the branch that had struck her, and scrambled out to see what had happened.

Omega stood at the edge of a jagged crack in the lawn.

A woman in a yellow and russet dress faced him across it. She had her skirt gathered up in one hand as if arrested in the act of measuring the crack in the ground with her eye, preparing to jump it.

The two were illuminated only by a shaft of golden light spilling from a broken wall of a building behind them. The edifice must have been fifty storeys tall, isolated on a hillside of sculpted gardens overlooking a sprawling city.

The city lights would normally have been a solid carpet of glowing jewels, but there were huge tattered holes in that carpet now, sections of the city without power.

Omega was staring up at the building which was settling majestically down the slope of the hill on which it had been built. The foundation was sliding down toward a broad roadway, the top of the building leaning back against the hillside.

Alpha was sure it shouldn't be doing that.

There was a wailing sound in the far distance, perhaps some sort of emergency signal.

"Was there anyone else back under there?" asked the woman gesturing toward the trees as she glanced toward the source of the sound.

"No," answered Alpha, finally understanding what she was seeing, "but there are people in that building. I wasn't aware this place suffered many seismic disturbances."

"It doesn't," supplied Omega, and leapt over the gaping crack. He stumbled as he landed, but danced clear of the crumbling edge where the rain was eroding the soil.

The woman put out a hand to steady him. He took it though he didn't need it.

The woman said, "I'm Martet of Martet." She turned to follow Alpha's gesture at the building, continuing, "I was looking for Iver - of Iver Industries. Did he send you two to meet m. . . ."

Alpha took advantage of the woman's distraction to levitate across the crack. It earned her a frown from Omega. They were here to observe, and the less they upset the natives the more their observations would be worth. She grinned back. She hadn't been seen.

"Excuse me," said Martet and took off toward the building at a fast walk.

"Come on," said Omega, following Martet. "There's something strange going on here, and I suspect this Iver might know about it."

Alpha had to agree. She'd thought she'd become quite adept at reading mortals during their tour, but this Martet seemed brimming with contradictory emotions. There was a grim fury deeply rooted in some kind of bright hope. But the hope had been tarnished by betrayal, tarnished but not extinguished until the moment she had turned to see the

building crumpling.

Alpha lengthened her stride to catch up with the woman, subtly using levitation to keep from slipping. I just may have to rescue Iver from Martet!

Despite her flimsy dress sandals, Martet moved swiftly enough to give Alpha, in her sturdy walking shoes, a challenge. But just at the edge of the dangerous area around the building, Alpha stopped her with a hand to her elbow.

"Wait! That whole building is going to come down. You can't go in there." This near to it, they could hear the grinding roar of the collapse even over the hiss of the rain.

Martet favored Alpha with a most peculiar look, then visibly brushed aside her own offense in favor of a more important issue. "If he wasn't waiting for me in the garden, then he was probably still at the party. And if anyone can prevent this from happening again, it's Iver, though he may take some convincing." She flashed a sparkling grin and tossed a long, sodden strand of hair over her shoulder. "You're perfectly free to come with me, if you like."

Omega caught up just as Martet took off. "What did you say that offended her like that? How can you get clean data if you can't even be civil to the natives?"

"All you could see was the offense? You couldn't see her put it aside as irrelevant? Omega, she's pretty well evolved as people go out here on the Wheel."

He made an exasperated sound. Alpha couldn't recall Omega having been in such a mood in all the millennia she'd known him. He just wasn't seeing straight. She recited the exchange, ending, "I don't think she was offended so much as she was astonished that I told her she couldn't do something she intended to do."

"To be expected with these folk. Watch the way you say things. It could mark us as outsiders. But if they're that bad, they don't have a chance to survive to enlightenment."

His pessimism impelled her to say, "Don't be too hasty. It could be a strength for each individual to do all their own thinking."

"Only if they're good at it, and this Iver seems to be prone to colossal errors."

"Iver?"

"Obviously, it's his mistake that caused this quake and our Martet seems to know that."

"That's one possible interpretation," she allowed.

"Do you honestly think this was a natural occurrence?"

Omega had his pride. He could just be defending his original assessment of the area as a seismically stable one. But the whole planet was volcanically active. "Perhaps she only meant that the building had been improperly built."

He looked at her with astonishment. "You really weren't reading her any deeper than broadcast emotions, were you?"

"Well, we agreed not to, this time. So if we're going to find out, we're going to have to go after her."

By an occasional lightning flash, Martet could just be seen as a tiny figure scrambling over the shifting rubble.

"Not good enough. We've got to help her find Iver."

Alpha signed. "All right. But without letting her know we're helping."

There were a lot of people trapped, dying, in the building, but many had escaped. From where the Yiembrri stood, they could easily perceive that some were wandering the street out in front of the building, dazed or hurt while some of the escapees had organized rescue for those still trapped. Other rescuers were just arriving.

Good, she thought, at least they can cooperate when they have to. But it also meant the Yiembrri would have to be careful. "Omega, you go down that way, toward the road, and I'll take the top of the building, up the hill there. Keep watch on Martet. Whoever finds Iver first will lure Martet in and the other can follow."

Omega nodded and started picking his way down the hill, levitating to keep his weight from shifting the mud and rubble. Every once in a while both his feet left the ground. Then he'd drop heavily onto whatever was under him and scan the vicinity to see if he'd been observed. But he was getting better as she watched.

What he really wanted, she knew, was to get this Iver alone for a few minutes and drain his mind. But he'd never really do it. Omega was always scrupulous, especially when collecting data.

She started up the slope, trying to picture how the building had looked when standing completely upright. It must have been nearly against the hill on one side, a huge cylinder with flanges jutting out in various directions. The hill had been dug out to accommodate the structure. Perhaps the foundation hadn't been properly set, for now the lower floors had advanced almost to the road while the upper floors lay back against the hillside, the central part of the building crumpling under the strain.

She hadn't gone far when she recognized a piece that must have been an overhanging balcony with a fabulous view of the city. Now it lay against the mud, twisted supports sticking up, a fountain of water spewing into the air above it - a broken water supply pipe. Together with the rain, the water made a veritable river pouring down slope, gushing and gurgling as it found places to plunge into the depths of the building.

She circled, aware that the metal struts and the water made the place a perfect target for the lightning. But she knew that even if she got hit directly, it wouldn't do her much damage, though it surely wouldn't be a pleasant

experience. Getting hit on the head, knocked unconscious, waking without full memory, being covered with slimy muck, and chilled through by the rain were all things mortals lived with every day. And they tended to avoid electrocution.

She finally found a slab of concrete from which to survey the upper part of the building. She let her awareness expand to sift through the entire structure, and she was instantly sorry.

There were thirty three people trapped in this section of the building, terrified, agonized or unconscious. It would have been nothing for her to lift them out and deposit them each to the safety of the street and their fellows. She and Omega could rescue the whole town. They could spend all the millennia rescuing mortals. And not a single rescue would produce enlightenment or evolution. Not a single act of mercy would help another race take the leap that her ancestors had taken. At least, no such act had helped yet.

Even now, with almost half the races of The Experiment examined, all the data inconclusive if somewhat suggestive, they still had no clue as to why Yiembrl had taken that leap, and no one else had. In such ignorance, she couldn't judge what would be a truly merciful act, and what would be only a futile cruelty. So, in ignorance, she chose to do nothing for the unfortunates.

Instead, she concentrated on identifying Iver, using the

identity matrix she had picked up when Martet said his name.

And she was in luck. He was trapped where a stairwell had folded and buckled. His leg was caught under a block of concrete, and water was pouring into the hole. Every few minutes he let out a bellowing call for help that echoed around him. It was near her edge of the building where the outer wall had fallen away. If his leg had not been pinned, he could have climbed and crawled to safety.

She was tempted to simply pull him out and erase his memory of it, but Omega would be furious - rightfully so. He would want to find out what Martet would do when she had Iver at her mercy. And Alpha was also curious. There would still be time for rescuing, if that seemed appropriate.

She started for Iver while she located Martet, heaving rubble off a dead child, and gave her the hint of the sound of Iver's voice calling, adding a directional impression.

Omega picked up on it immediately and cut off his search among the injured and bewildered who were now being gathered into an emergency medical tent set up in the roadway. As he gave her a direct image of what they were doing with the wounded, Alpha was both appalled and gratified; appalled at the ineffectual measures they took, and gratified that they had the desire to help one another as best they could.

Omega had finally mastered the art of levitating just enough to keep from slipping and sliding in the mud without

floating in air. He arrived just ahead of Martet, and he brought an emergency lantern.

Alpha was already there, jackknifed over the edge of the hole and calling encouragement to Iver. She looked up with reigning surprise when Martet knelt beside her. "Is this your man?"

"Don't believe everything you read," she cautioned absently as if used to fending off that question with a misleading comment. She bent over the hole. "Iver? Is that you? Are you alone?"

"Martet!" He drew a weary, tremulous breath, but his voice, when he spoke, was level. "Yes I'm alone. All right, name your price."

"Do we have to talk in front of your - uh - employees?"

"They're not mine. I thought they were yours."

"No. I met them in the garden where we said we'd meet. They followed me looking for you, so I thought"

"Never saw them before. Sorry about missing our appointment. Unavoidably detained."

"So I see." She studied him and Alpha sensed it when she decided he wasn't lying. Martet turned to examine the Ylembri. "You never did say who you are."

"Oh, we're just visiting," said Omega.

Alpha suggested, "If you'd rather we left . . . ?"

They could eavesdrop just as well from a good distance,

if necessary, but the data would be more reliable if collected at close hand. And she had a feeling about this one. Martet's aura had shifted to the intensely personal several times during the exchange with Iver, revealing shock, betrayal and outrage, but beneath that a fierce affection, a burning admiration, and a melange of other emotions.

Meanwhile, Omega's lantern had obligingly illuminated Iver's plight. Martet could see that it would take a good deal of muscle to move the block of concrete pinning Iver down. And if he were badly injured, they'd have to lift him out of there.

Already the water was nearly up to his waist. Martet decided, "I'd be grateful if you two would stay and help. The rubble could shift again at any moment. We'll need a lever of some sort. Not too long. There isn't too much clearance down there."

Alpha looked at Omega. Omega looked at Alpha. Whatever these two mortals had to say to each other, it could be definitive for The Experiment. Neither wanted to go hunt for a lever. Finally, Omega gestured toward a deeply shadowed nook. "I think that one might do."

Alpha sensed a twisted but strong piece of metal materialize in the darkness. She hitched herself up, fetched it and handed it to Martet who hefted it. The piece was almost as tall as she was, and quite heavy.

Instead, she slid it into the hole until it rested on the bottom beneath the water, propped it against the lip, then leaned on it and went down it hand over hand.

Omega eyed the ruin and said, "I think it's about settled. At least it should hold long enough for this." As he spoke, he arranged that it should be so. Then he followed Martet, but he cheated by levitating most of his weight.

Alpha did it the hard way, somewhat surprised that she could, surprised but pleased.

When she reached bottom, standing knee deep in the water, feeling the stair risers as narrow ledges beneath the water, Martet had dunked the lantern under water and was lying prone, her head beneath the surface. There was blood in the water, a disturbing reminder of mortality.

Omega shifted the pole around, trying to find a place to stand and a point to use as fulcrum while Martet guided the end under the chunk of concrete. Alpha found a loose step riser and wrestled it under the lever, propping it to make a fulcrum.

Martet surfaced, panting, pulled up the lantern and aimed it at Iver. "Leg's broken. Maybe more than once. But I think we can get you out of here."

"I told you, name your price."

"Confession. Full confession. And your word to do whatever I say has to be done to make sure this never happens

again."

"All right. All right. I did it. It was a mistake, just like you said it would be. Does the whole world have to know all the details?" He eyed the Ylembri.

Martet considered them. "Let them be your judges. We know nothing about them. Not even their names. They'll leave here with the power to ruin Iver Industries, and you won't know where to find them. But they'll know where to find you. If necessary."

"You'd do that to me?"

She gestured to the pinned leg. "You've done it to yourself. Come, Iver, it's no more than you deserve, and I'm curious. Just how did you steal my fault line map? I thought Martet Labs was secure."

"It was until I convinced your Chief of Operations that you were withholding life saving knowledge from the public and that Iver Industries had the skill to put that knowledge to use." He hitched himself up out of the slowly rising water and lifted a hand in appeal. "Martet, we could have stopped the quakes, protected the cities! It should have worked!"

"But it didn't. We don't know enough. We could destroy the planet before we can lift ourselves off it! We don't even know yet if your experiment did permanent damage! There's never been a quake here before. Now the building

codes will have to be changed because it could happen again."

"I admitted you were right. I shouldn't have stolen your maps. I shouldn't have used my projectors, at least not before - " He broke off and glanced up at her stern features. "No, I shouldn't have used them at all. We didn't know what would happen. We don't really understand crustal shearing forces, nevermind plate tectonics."

"Is that the only reason you shouldn't have done it, because you don't understand enough?" asked Martet as if it were a test he had to pass in order to earn life.

He studied her carefully. "People have a right to decide for themselves whether to take risks. That's a basic principle of reality. I didn't think there was anyone who'd disapprove if they could understand what I wanted to do."

"And how many people in this world could understand it if it was explained to them?"

"Well"

"Maybe just you. Does that give you the right to decide for others to risk their lives?"

"No." He was a small boy caught disobeying a rule. "I just wanted to help! I wanted to make a gift to mankind, a gift people for generations to come would marvel at and give me the title Iver or Iver. There's nothing wrong with that, is there?"

"Your generosity does you credit - almost but not quite

enough credit to offset your vanity. What are you going to do to see that this never happens again?"

"I'll erase our copies of the maps. I'll dismantle the machines. I'll scatter my research team."

"Not enough," Martet said implacably. "People have died because of your idiocy, your thert, your petty ego. Survivors grieve. Whole Industries and Houses have been toppled to ruin. And aftershocks of this quake could make it worse."

"What do you want from me? All of Iver's resources couldn't pay reparations for all this! The whole city could be in this condition, maybe the whole seaboard for all I know!"

"I want you to swear, right now before witnesses, on the life we're about to give back to you, that you'll use all Iver's power, prestige, and at least ten percent of the annual gross of the company to support writers and artists who show people how and why it is that no one can win striving against the gods as you have done.

"Each and every one of the errors that led you to this must be taught. You must try to prevent anyone else from repeating them in any other context. And when you've exhausted the errors you've already confessed, I dearly hope you'll have discovered at least some of the rest.

"Perhaps, if you spend enough time striving with the

gods instead of against them, you'll come to understand what it takes to merit the acclaim you so crave."

Strive with the gods instead of against them . . . It sounded like some kind of a quote. Iver seemed to take in the reference. Alpha didn't miss the look of near worship that he gave Martet, either. It was the woman he strove to merit, not a place in history. Alpha suspected she knew it.

Omega said, "That sounds just, but if the public has the right to decide to take the risk of Iver's experiment, doesn't that same public have the right to judge him now?"

Martet gave him a strange look.

Curious, Alpha couldn't restrain an automatic mental probe. They don't have public courts of law! She said, "We only meant to suggest that perhaps Iver's role in the current disaster should be made public, as well."

"That would ruin Iver Industries," said Martet genuinely puzzled. "Then there would be no resources to use to prevent a repetition. Anyone can map faults, anyone can build sonic vibrators, anyone could hatch a plan to create small quakes to prevent big ones. It's a currently fashionable theory, after all. Someone else is bound to think to try it. We have to convince them not to. Exposing Iver as the instigator of this disaster would only convince someone else to study his mistakes and try again, but more cleverly."

"Martet's right," said Iver. "I'll make it fifteen

percent. Or more if you want. I'll even let you judge what projects to fund. But let's not argue it out now."

The water had risen high on Iver's chest, and his face was pinched and white from shock, the loss of blood, and the demon conscience who stood over him with the power of life and death.

"Oh, no," said Martet ruthlessly. "I'll have your full agreement here and now. You must judge each project, fiction or fact, personally, in proposal, in outline, and in final form. And our two friends here will judge if you have done well enough to remain in charge of Iver Industries - or if indeed the company should continue at all. They will hold the power over you, not I. Perhaps they will become dissatisfied and do as they have proposed - let everyone know now this quake came about putting an end to Iver Industries."

Omega protested, "We don't want that kind of power."

Martet met his eyes. "Why not? You have to live on this world, too. You're part of this pact, but I think you should be sworn to silence unless you judge that he has reneged. Swear it."

"By what should I swear?" asked Omega.

"By your life, as he swears, as I swear."

"Very well, then," he replied with a straight face, "then I swear by my life that I will keep silence in this matter unless he - uh - reneges."

Martet turned to Alpha. "And you. By your life."

Alpha wondered if swearing by something she didn't even have invalidated the oath, but she said the words. In her heart they bound her to this world in a way she had never been bound except to the Ylembri. Regardless of what Omega wanted, she'd have to return to this world to judge Iver's progress. She was committed, maybe even to guiding this entire people in their evolution, and nevermind The Experiment. A tear formed unbidden in her right eye.

"Now," said Martet, "Iver, it's your turn."

"By my life, then, I swear, but it won't be worth much if you don't hurry up and get me out of this."

The water was up to his chin. The three of them moved to the free end of the lever and bore down. But even when Alpha added all her weight onto the lever, the chunk of concrete did not budge. And that way, there was no one free to pull Iver out if they could have lifted it. He looked as if he would faint at any moment. Then he would drown if no one held him above the water.

"Wait!" gasped Alpha. "I have an idea. Martet, you should get set to pull him out while I move the fulcrum and reset the lever. I think I can balance it so my partner can lift the thing by himself." She turned so only Omega could see her face and met his eyes as she projected, I've got to levitate it. There's just no other way.

He returned her gaze, eyes half closing in warning.
Save his life using powers outside the order of this world
and you'll be deeply involved, perhaps even bound.

She began wrestling the fulcrum around, as if that would help. And what do you think we've been doing, locating Iver,
helping Martet find him, materializing a lever, taking oath?
Isn't that becoming deeply involved?

She ducked under the water to fiddle with the way the lever was seated under the chunk of concrete. We've learned
all we can of these two. The Experiment won't be sullied if
we save his life now. Besides, you were right, our landing
under a falling tree wasn't your mistake, it was his. He has
to survive to teach what he's learned.

He played with the lever, motioning her to move the fulcrum this way and that as he replied, At least now you
agree that these aren't the people who will prove that
isolation spurs evolution. This is a people without awe,
without humility, a people that knows no bounds to ambition.
Today they tinker with their planet's structure, tomorrow
they may try to customize the operation of time itself.
They'll destroy themselves before they can evolve into a
species like our own.

Not if Martet's method of teaching about errors works
for these people! You have to admit, this way of handling a
such a problem is unique. I think it has a lot of promise.

Alpha, it isn't going to work!

With the man about to drown, she decided not to argue that ambition didn't hamper evolution while love could only spur evolution on.

She ducked under the water as if to adjust the seating of the lever then levitated the concrete off the mangled leg. Blood clouded into the water and she surfaced, more disturbed by the blood than she wanted anyone to see. In primitive times, her own people had done magic with blood, binding magic. It was a sound principle - for mortals.

As she came up, Omega was leaning hard onto the lever, letting it bend a little under the force, but he was helping Alpha to steady the levitated mass, to let it move no more than it would if the lever were lifting it. "Now!" grunted Omega as if exerting tremendous effort. "Pull him out!"

When the pressure on his leg lifted, Iver rainted.

Alpha rushed to help Martet. Together the women moved the inert body. They bandaged the leg with bits of their clothing and fashioned a sling to hoist Iver out of the hole.

Crouching on the oozing mud of what had once been the garden, they gasped for breath. It was a cherished moment for Alpha, a moment of shared effort rewarded. Omega caught her eye, waved his hand, and sat back on his haunches to watch the part of the building where they had labored finally collapse on itself.

Not using extraordinary forces to save his life, hmmm?
Remain uninvolved, just an observer?

Well, I'd forgotten about the stasis on the building.
It was for our convenience, not his.

Oh.

When the ruin had settled at last, Martet wrung her long hair out and heaved a sigh. "We were lucky. That could have happened while we were in there."

Alpha touched Martet's shoulder and pointed down the slope where they could just make out three men with an empty stretcher and a lantern fleeing the collapse.

Martet jumped up, put two fingers to her mouth and let out a piercing whistle. The stretcher bearers paused, searching the darkness. Omega and Alpha got up, jumping and waving. Omega called, "We've got one for you!"

At last, they brought the stretcher, and while they were strapping Iver onto it, Martet held her muddied hands out for the rain to wash off, then offered one to Omega. "You risked your life to help us. I think I, at least, should know your names."

He took the hand in the local version of the gesture of trust. "Oh, I doubt that's necessary. But you can call me Omega. And this is Alpha."

She nodded. "Cute. Where can I get in touch with you?"

Alpha said, "We'll stop back in a while to see how

things are going."

Omega frowned but kept silent.

"You did swear. You won't forget that?"

Alpha said, "Of course not. It would be difficult to escape knowledge of Iver's doings anywhere on this planet."

"Well, that's true. When you hear we're to be married, come around. There will be invitations waiting for you at the door."

"Married?" said Omega blankly.

Alpha said, "We'll be there. But we've got to go now." She hooked a hand around Omega's arm and pulled him out across the grounds toward the fallen tree.

When they'd gone far enough that the hiss of the rain covered their voices, she said, "It'll work out for them. I know it will. If two people who're so much alike are going to be able to love anywhere in this galaxy, it'll be here. The greatest evolutionary leaps occur within the bonds of love."

"So very much alike," muttered Omega as they crossed the crack in the grass. "So very much alike? Alpha, that's it! That's what's been bothering me about this whole affair. They're not alike! There's a definite admixture of the first and fourth types in this fifth type - at least in the two specimens we've observed."

He stopped at the edge of the trees to grab her by the

upper arms and demand her full attention. "The Experiment could be tainted! If this world has been visited by beings from any of the others - "

"Omega, that's simply not possible! We've observed a pure type here"

"Are we sure? Are we really sure? Maybe none of the others visited here, but perhaps these folk have visited elsewhere."

"When they don't even understand crustal tectonics, you think they have interstellar travel?"

"Put that way, it does sound absurd." He turned and paced toward the trees nibbling on a knuckle. Then he whirled, "But they dream. We gave them that capacity. I remember the argument very clearly. Alpha, we may have made as idiotic a blunder as our young Iver there. They could be traveling in their dreams."

"No! I checked everything personally. There's absolutely no way there could be any contact between the specimens."

"We'll just have to recheck it then. It would be very tedious to have to start this whole thing over, but if there's been contamination, we'll have to."

She signed and went into the stand of trees with him looking for a secluded spot where they could disappear. "All right, we'll recheck." At least that would keep him busy on

the next leg of their itinerary, and maybe keep him from brooding on their oaths and level of involvement.

For Alpha's part, she was convinced that this fifth type had a good shot at making that evolutionary leap in record time.

The End

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