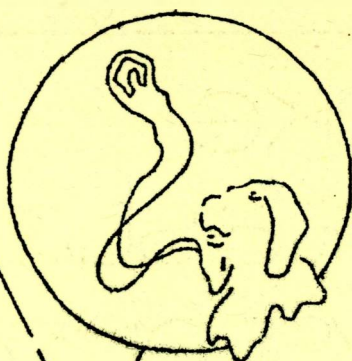


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ONE



Queen Press

MARTINE THOMÉ

this fake
fantastic
mystery
Number, 1

published by

PIERRE VERSINS

Primerose 38

LAUSANNE

Switzerland

was issued to please John CHAMPION
who wished a straight number one
and to convince myself
that I am still
a science fiction author.

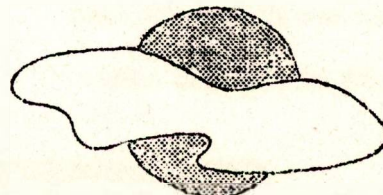
The title of the following story
is

MIAN

(and I swear it has been written
as it was thought,

and that it has been thought
in English.

If,
naturally,
it is English you are about to read)



SEPTEMBER 1957

[illegible]

The first words they said, when at last they came, were : "Where are they ? Show us in the least some of them, we must know ! Don't you understand that we must know ?"

It was a glorious afternoon, warm and quiet (maybe too quiet ?), full of wandering jewels riding upon green and golden rays high in the sky. What cannot happen when such a day clothes the earth with an air filled with the very scents of life ?

This shining object which whirled furiously, as if it were alive, right in the middle of the glade, made us blink. We knew it from old stories, as old as Mankind, but never had we seen one with our own eyes. And we wondered if it was real in the sense we think trees and grass and birds to be real ones, or a mere projection of some thought far far away, as a few tales suggested.

As for the strangers, the same question was in our minds. They were visible enough, not whirling at all, but we couldn't help shuddering a little. They were far too much like us, and we never liked the idea not to be left alone, to admit them without a kind of disquietude and bitterness.

And they came, they came, sure of their right to come, no trouble showing through their eyes, as if nothing, no one could cross their path, immune from the sorrows which fell instantly upon us, why immune ?..

It was no longer a glorious day. The birds, above, feeling immediately the change, went gliding near the top of the trees, but far away from us, not daring, not daring. If only we could, I thought. But no, we can't copy beasts, else why keep thinking and wondering and doing things with a purpose? A bundle of clouds were gathering around the hill and the new-born wind threw them at us. Already, the trees surrounding the glade were shaken by the beginning storm.

"Well ?.." I said to the nearest stranger, who was not ten feet away.

He didn't answer. Had he, anyhow the thunder rolling incessantly would have drowned his words and their meanings, if they had any. It was now nearly dark, although all around us was lighted every second by the fire which the sky gives the earth and which the earth gives back the sky.

[illegible]

to Jean and Annie

LJNARD

whose confidence in myself

is guilty though communicative

Had they not

thrust me

into Fandom

this ffm wouldn't have seen

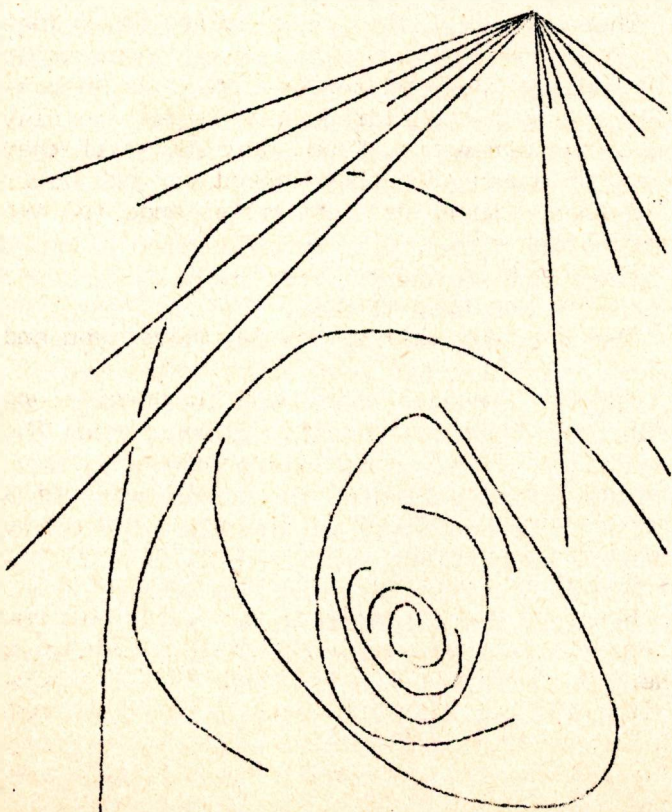
the light of days to come.

SUCH A RESPONSIBILITY !...

their machine, giving us the peace of mind we waited for. And when the Moon raised her head from behind the hill, still we heard nothing beyond the crying of our children whose hunger kept them awake. Jess had had no time for the hunting. She gave them a piece of wood as to quiet them, and five minutes later they were again asleep.

Then we went out and watched together the storm lull, the machine whirl and the Moon travel, and we listened to the great felines roaring far away, to the soft flips of the last drops left by the rain on the large green leaves and falling down upon the moist grass around the glade.

We waited till the morning, on the doorstep of our home, me sleeping when Jess opened her eyes and awake from midnight to dawn. Then I awoke her. A stranger was coming, not one of those who were so proud, the former day, but another, a very young one, with no beard and no flames in his eyes ... in her eyes, for she was not a young boy but a young girl, as I saw clearly when she came and stood only one step in front of me. I glanced upon my shoulder at Jess, her mind was elsewhere and I dare not disturb her when there is no need to. I held



my breath and, returning to the stranger, I stretched out my arm and I touched her cheeks. They were as soft as my little May's. The stranger smiled and I smiled and Jess, coming out of her dreams, was smiling too.

"Well," said the stranger - and her voice was disturbing, not soft at all as I expected but raucous, like a tree cracking when comes Spring - "well, you know I'm real, by now ?"

I was not sure, but before I could say so, Jess was answering :

"Of course, we do."

"Then," went on the girl, "there is nothing to be afraid of?.. I taught the others, but ..." she added to herself.

"Nothing," said Jess, "nothing at all."

"Do you mean it?"

"I do."

"May I tell the others to come ?"

I sensed Jess withstanding at once. She said nothing for a while. The stranger was there, swinging from one foot to the other, her eyes straight in mine. Strange, I thought, why in my eyes when I'm not speaking, when it's Jess who takes care of all ?

"No," said Jess all of a sudden, and then, quite immediately : "Yes, you may. But no more than two or three of them."

There was a time of confusion after what we found ourselves all seated in front of the house, Jess on the doorstep, as an obstacle for the children who wanted to play with the strangers. Then, as calm as if they were no strangers, they talked to each other and then, there was a great silence and the girl began :

"Do you know who we are ?"

I said yes with my head.

"Do you know that we are brothers, you and us ?"

Again, I nodded, but with no conviction. And Jess was no more assured than I was. The girl felt this and added, hastily :

"But you must know this ! We said it a hundred times to you ! You don't think we are fooling you ? We couldn't try to, isn't it ?"

Her eyes were always in mine, I felt uncomfortable but couldn't help looking at her. Were we actually brothers ? Was it possible for her kind and mine to be the same kind of people ? No, said my mind.

"No," I said, nevertheless, "you could not."



they gave us this very Earth, as a free gift
and for the eternity to come. That is why
you fools won't fool them !"

I saw bewildered faces in my life, but none so amazed than the stranger's after these words which I thought we had sent them a thousand times when they asked us through the immensity of spaces. But that was evidently the first time they heard this, which is History for us. And they claimed to be our brothers !..

"How a brother can't know what his brother knows ?" I asked.

But they were listening no longer. They debated, in their own tongue, what Jess had just said. After a long time, they came again to us and asked :

"So, you say Men created you. Your race, you no doubt mean by this? Not just you both?"

"No," answered Jess with a slight smile, "it's our whole race they created out of nothing."

"Out of nothing, are you sure ?"

"Out of nothing."

Silence, and again they argued together,
And again one, the girl this time, said :

"Out of nothing, good. And then ?.."

"And then ?.. Oh yes, then they went to the stars."

"Didn't it occur to you ..."

The girl was undecided for a while, but went on :

"Didn't it occur to you that this could be a mistake?"

"A mistake ? Going to the stars ?"

"No, no. A mistake which permitted your race to grow."

Jess smiled gently, as if they were children asking silly questions.

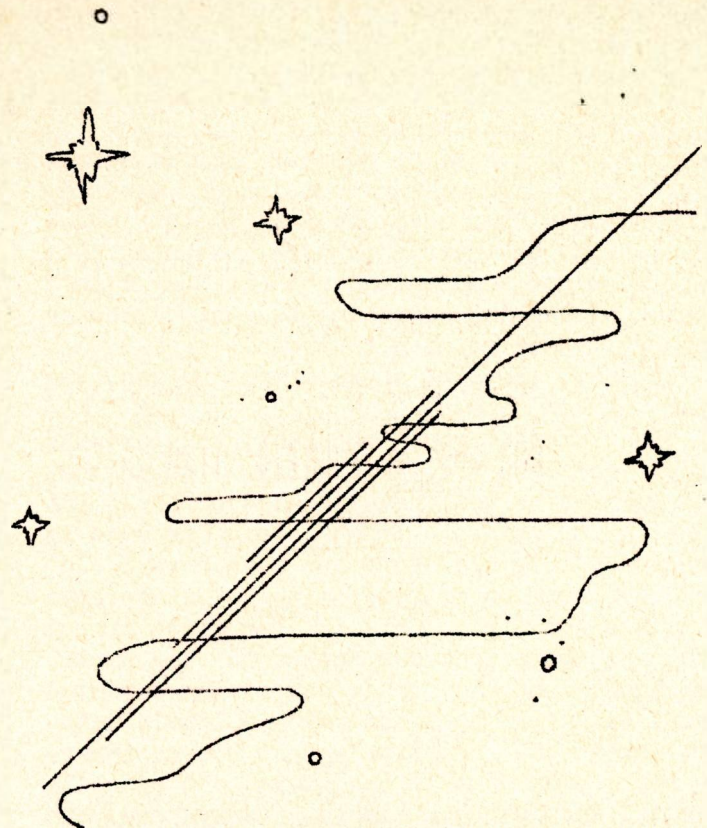
"Sure, that was a mistake," she said. "Are new men not always made from the mistakes of the Gods ?"

I never had thought of this, but it was clever, indeed. But the others weren't satisfied.

"You misunderstood me," went on the girl, "But we can't go far, this way. Please, explain exactly how your race was created by Man."

Jess thought a little while, and :

"Well," she said, with an hesitation, "I don't know all, naturally. But what I know, I know. I may put it this way : there was once Man ... or better : there were once Men and they were alone upon this Earth of ours,



and they went and went, increasing in wealth and knowledge, and a time came when they began to play with things, and things were hard to play with, so they played, not knowing exactly the rules, but they played nonetheless, and the times went and one day they found what were the rules, but it was a little too late and they were bound to go to the stars, far away from this Earth which was no longer safe for them, and then they thought that it was a pity to let this green-haired and lovely world to mere brute beasts, and they thought that they might as well give it to new men who could live where they could no longer themselves live, and they thought a little further and there we are. isn't it wonderful ?"

A long, long silence, and a voice, a little scared voice - how could I understand that they had to be scared ! - a little voice arose :

"You said there were a little of them still here ?"

"Yes, because they couldn't go away all at once. They had to prepare a lot of ships - spaceships, as they call them - and the more of them were gone, the less they had hands to make other ships. Now they are all hiding

FE N_{ooo}

this ffm number 1, despite its number, is something of an anniversary issue, being the sixth ffm put out of versins' head in versins' hands and out of versins' hands in post-office, whence it was sent to you.

As to permit me to breathe a little while before ffm ending number five, bound to happen the 1st of october, and since the story you have read was already written just after mailing ffm number four, I sent this straight ffm No 1 the 15th of august. Which subtlety gives me two (2) months of fanacations.

Am I not wise ?

Look nonetheless ahead for ffm ending number five.

It'll be the ONLY fanmag NOT to give you news and reports from the
L O N D O N C O N V E N T I O N

Is not that a title for your perennial gratitude ?

Now, I remain your pet ... er ... your Pete, I mean !

