

Trust

THE RAIN still came. The sun fought with the thick clouds, succeeding only in brightening the green of the dripping leaves, and raising the temperature another notch above the unbearable. The man slowly placed one foot before the other on the steaming ground in the weary plodding motion of a man driven towards a destination without really hoping he'll ever arrive.

He plodded on and on, oblivious to his steaming surroundings. His mind was still numb from the screams, the screams torn from rending metal and breaking bodies. How long ago had the plane crashed . . . a week, a day, a month. . .

Blood, pain. My blood! Oh God! My arm, my ARM! Ripped and bleeding, by the jagged fragment from the bulkhead back of the pilot's compartment — Trust the pilots, the all-knowing pilots. They will get us there. That fire in the motor won't — Fasten your safety belts, we're going to land in a clearing. Fasten the safety belt and nothing can hurt you. Fasten your safety belt — Wake up, wake up, the sun is bright. It's already almost noon. Wake up, Hank. Oh God! My arm, my ARM, and the blue eyes, the beautiful blue eyes of the stewardess. Everything is all right, just trust in the pilot —

One foot, then the other, then the first again. Step by step, bit by bit, he moved through the dripping brush. He no longer noticed the continual slap, slap of the wet dripping leaves on his face. The last few hours were a lifetime. A lifetime of torture, a lifetime devoid of meaning, of reality itself.

Trust the pilot, trust, trust, trust. The pilot knows best, Mommy knows best. Don't pay any attention to what those bad boys say. Mommy loves you and Mommy knows best — Mommy, what does adopted mean?

He watched the water, blood and sweat run down his arm. Drip, drip, dripping with the steadiness of the second hand of a clock. A big clock. Like the big clock that stared him in the face in the study hall of Central High. Central High. Good old Central High! Central High and voices. Voices heard over the row of lockers. Voices heard by mistake. "Hank is such a square. He couldn't get a date for the prom. No wonder. Why doesn't he wise up and quit trying to own every girl he dates? He can't help it. He's, whatdoyoucallit, insecure." Good old Hank. Poor old Hank. It wasn't true. He was just looking for a girl he could trust. A girl who wanted to settle down. But they didn't understand — They never understood!

Drip, drip, drip. The water, sweat and blood fell and was drunk up by the ground. The ground that knew no difference, and wouldn't care if it did know. He still moved onward, plodding, his feet dragging a bit now. Dragging, sliding, like the steps of a dance — a horrible, nightmare dance.

Slide, one, two, three, slide, one, two, three. Dancing lessons. The guys in the dorm laughed at him. A senior at Tech taking dancing lessons! Why? Because of a silly, giggling blonde. But Joyce wasn't silly. She understood him. She believed in him. And her belief gave him strength. Ah, yes, Joyce. She believed in him. Until the captain of the football team came along. "I'm sorry Hank, I can't go. I'm just not feeling well tonight." But she was there. She was there with her football player.

The brush got thicker. But still he plodded on. Blindly, he stumbled on. His head struck a low-hanging branch. He fell to his knees. And still he moved on, his knees leaving two parallel trails in the earth behind him. But still he moved on. On, on his knees.

On his knees. On his knees to Kathy, asking her, no, begging her to marry him. He could hardly believe it when she said yes. But she said yes. He knew they had been wrong when they said she was just a party girl, out for a good time. Sure she liked the presents he gave her, the bracelets, the earrings, and now the diamond ring. But all girls like presents. They had set the day in June and then it happened. His big chance. Sole company representative in Brazil. He

could hardly wait to tell her. But when he did, she cried. She screamed; she raved; and then she cried some more. "But Hank, how could you? There'd be absolutely nothing to do. And no place to go, in those horrid jungles." He couldn't convince her that they were going to a city, of not as big as New York, at least as modern. She offered to give his ring back, but didn't argue when he refused it. She didn't even come to the airport to see him off. She was out to dinner with another man who gave her a bracelet.

Trust. Trust in Mommy. Trust in sweethearts. Trust the pilot. Trust no one. No one. No one! —

They found him two weeks later. They found him a mile from the wreckage. What was left of the body was lying on its side, the knees hugged tightly to the chest, the head tucked down. He had found security.

—David L. Slater, *Sci., Soph.*



The Mouse

IT WAS a drizzly night, and the moisture hung in the air like cold steam. "Here Baron," a thin voiced called. He was a small, ulcerish man with a wrinkled face and false teeth.

George raised his voice, trying to make it sound commanding. "Baron, come here." Nothing happened.

"Run away again," he thought. "Suppose I'll have to find him or Martha will have a fit."

"Here Baron."

"He always heads for the beach. Probably down there now."

George pulled the huge topcoat tighter around his frail shoulders and trudged down the damp street, whistling and calling to the shadows.

"Just like Johnny," he thought. "Always running off. How many times have I told that boy not to hang around