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SOME
DREAMS
ARE
NIGHTMARES

JAMES GUNN

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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
NEW YORK

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“The Cave of Night” originally appeared in *Galaxy Science Fiction*, Copyright 1955 Galaxy Publishing Corp., and was part of *Station in Space* published by Bantam Books in 1958.

“The Hedonist” originally appeared under the title of “Name Your Pleasure” in *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, Copyright 1954 Standard Magazines, Inc., and was part of *The Joy Makers* published by Bantam Books in 1961.

“New Blood” originally appeared in *Astounding Science Fiction*, Copyright 1955 Street & Smith Publications, Inc., and was part of *The Immortals* published by Bantam Books in 1962.

“Medic” originally appeared under the title of “Not So Great an Enemy” in *Venture Science Fiction*, Copyright 1957 Mercury Press, Inc., and was part of *The Immortals* published by Bantam Books in 1962.

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1 3 5 7 9 11 13 15 17 19 C/C 20 18 16 14 12 10 8 6 4 2

Printed in the United States of America
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 73-19263
ISBN 0-684-13779-8

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index cards. "Funny. He sold his blood once, but he didn't want to do it again." She walked across to the table against the east wall and opened a black, three-ring binder. She leafed through it.

"This is our registration and release form. Let's see, the third. Bean. Parker. Cartwright. Marshall Cartwright. Abbot Hotel. No phone listed."

"Abbot," Jansen said thoughtfully. "Sounds like a flop joint. Does that bring anything back?" he asked the technician insistently. "He didn't want his name on the donor's list."

Slowly, regretfully, she shook her head. "What's all this about anyway? Weaver? Isn't that the old boy up in 305 who made such a miraculous recovery?"

"Right," Jansen said, brushing the question away. "We'll want photostats of the two entries. Shall we take the books along now—"

"We'll see that you get them," Pearce cut in.

"Today," Jansen said.

"Today," Pearce agreed.

"That's all, then," Jansen said. "If you remember anything, get in touch with Mr. Weaver or me, Carl Jansen. There'll be something in it for you."

Something in it, something in it, Pearce thought. *The slogan of a class*. "What's in it for the human race? Never mind. You've got what you came for."

"I always do," Jansen said intently. "Mr. Weaver and I—we always get what we come for. Remember that!"

Pearce remembered while the young-old man named Leroy Weaver grew a handsome set of teeth, as white as his hair was black, and directed the course of his commercial empire from the hospital room, chafed at Pearce's delay in giving him the answer to his question, at the continual demands for blood samples, at his own enforced idleness,

and slyly pinched the nurses during the day. Pearce did not inquire into what happened at night.

Before the week was over, Weaver had forced through his discharge from the hospital and Pearce had located a private detective.

The black paint on the frosted glass of the door said:

JASON LOCKE
CONFIDENTIAL INVESTIGATIONS

But Locke wasn't Pearce's preconception of a private eye. He wasn't tough—not on the outside. The hardness was inside, and he didn't let it show.

Locke was middle-aged, graying, his face firm and tanned, a big man dressed in a well-draped tropical suit in light cocoa; he looked like a successful executive. Business wasn't that good: the office was shabby, deteriorating, the furniture was little better, and there was no secretary or receptionist.

He was just the man Pearce wanted.

He listened to Pearce and watched him with dark, steady eyes.

"I want you to find a man," Pearce said. "Marshall Cartwright. Last address: Abbot Hotel."

"Why?"

"What difference does it make?"

"I have a license to keep—and a desire to keep out of jail."

"There's nothing illegal about it," Pearce said quickly, "but there might be danger. I won't lie to you; it's a medical problem I can't explain. It's important to me that you find Cartwright. It's important to him—it might mean his life. It might even be important to the world. The danger lies in the fact that other people are looking for him; if they spot

you they might get rough. I want you to find Cartwright before they do.”

“Who is ‘they’?”

Pearce shrugged helplessly. “Pinkerton, Burns, International—I don’t know. One of the big firms, probably.”

“Is that why you didn’t go to them?”

“One reason. I won’t conceal anything, though. The man hiring them is Leroy Weaver.”

Locke looked interested. “I heard the old boy was back on the prowl. Have you got any pictures, descriptions, anything to help me spot this man Cartwright?”

Pearce looked down at his hands. “Nothing, except the name. He’s a young man. He sold a pint of his blood on the third. He refused to have his name added to our professional donor’s list. He gave his address then as the Abbot.”

“I know it,” Locke said. “A fly trap on Ninth. That means he’s left town, I’d say.”

“Why do you say that?”

“That’s why he sold the blood. To get out of town. He wasn’t interested in selling it again; he wasn’t going to be around. And anyone who would stay at a place like the Abbot wouldn’t toss away a chance at some regular, effortless money.”

“That’s what I figured,” Pearce said, nodding slowly. “Will you take the job?”

Locke swung around in his swivel chair and stared out the window across the light standards, transformers, and overhead power lines of Twelfth Street. It was nothing to look at, but he seemed to draw a decision from it. “Fifty dollars a day and expenses,” he said, swinging back. “Sixty if I have to go out of town.”

It was that afternoon Pearce discovered that he was being followed.

He walked along the warm autumn streets, and the careless crowds, the hurrying, anonymous shoppers, passed

on either side without a glance and came behind, and conviction walked with him. He moved through the air-conditioned stores, quickly or dawdling over a display of deodorants at a counter, glancing surreptitiously behind, seeing nothing but sure that someone was watching.

The symptoms were familiar. They were usually those of hysterical women, most often in that wistful, tormented period of middle age, but occasionally in adolescence or early womanhood. Pearce had never expected to share them: the sensitivity in the back of the neck and between the shoulder blades that made him want to shrug it away, the leg-tightening desire to hurry, to run, to dodge into a doorway, into an elevator. . . .

Pearce nodded to himself and lingered. When he went to his car, he went slowly, talked to the parking lot attendant for a moment before he drove away, and drove straight home.

He never did identify the man or men who shadowed him, then or later. It kept up for weeks, so that when it finally ended he felt strangely naked and alone.

When he got to his apartment, the telephone was ringing. That was not surprising. A doctor's phone rings a hundred times as often as that of an ordinary citizen.

Dr. Easter was the caller. The essence of what he wanted to say was that Pearce should not be foolish; Pearce should cooperate with Mr. Weaver.

"Of course I'm cooperating!" Pearce exclaimed. "I cooperate with all my patients."

"That isn't what I meant," Dr. Easter said in an unctuous voice. "Work with him, not against him. You'll find it's worth your while."

"It's worth my while to practice medicine the best way I can," Pearce said evenly. "Beyond that no one has a call on me, and no one ever will."

"Very fine sentiments," Dr. Easter agreed pleasantly.

"The question is: will Mr. Weaver think you are practicing medicine properly? That's something to consider."

Pearce lowered the phone gently into the cradle, thinking about how it was practicing medicine, being a doctor—and he knew he could never be happy at anything else. He turned over in his mind the subtle threat Easter had made; it could be done. The specter of malpractice was never completely absent, and a powerful alliance of money and respectability could come close to lifting a license.

He considered Easter, and he knew that it was better to risk the title than to give away the reality.

The next week was a time of wondering and waiting, and of keeping busy—a problem a doctor seldom faces. It was a time of uneventful routine.

Then it seemed as if everything happened at once.

As he walked from his car toward the front door of the apartment house, a hand reached out of the shadows beside an ornamental fir and pulled him into the darkness.

Before he could say anything or struggle, a hand was clamped tight over his mouth, and a voice whispered in his ear, "Quiet now! This is Locke. The private eye, remember?"

Pearce nodded stiffly. Slowly the hand relaxed. As his eyes adjusted to the darkness, Pearce made out Locke's features. His face was heavily, darkly bearded, and something had happened to the nose. Locke had been in a brawl; the nose was broken, and the face was cut and bruised.

"Never mind me," Locke said huskily. "You should see the other guys."

As Pearce drew back a little, he could see that Locke was dressed in old clothes looking like hand-me-downs from the Salvation Army. "Sorry I got you into it," he said.

"Part of the job. Listen. I haven't got long, and I want to give you my report."

"It can wait. Come on up. Let me take a look at that face. You can send me a written re—"

"Nothing doing," Locke said heavily. "I'm not signing my name to anything. Too dangerous. From now on I'm going to keep my nose clean. I did all right for a few days. Then they caught up with me. Well, they're sorry, too. You wanta hear it?"

Pearce nodded.

For a while Locke had thought he might get somewhere. He had registered at the Abbot, got friendly with the room clerk, and finally asked about his friend, Cartwright, who had flopped there a couple of weeks earlier. The clerk was willing enough to talk. Trouble was, he didn't know much, and what little he knew he wouldn't have told to a stranger. Guests at the Abbot were liable to be persecuted by police and collection agents, and the clerk had suspicions that every questioner was from the health board.

Cartwright had paid his bill and left suddenly, no forwarding address given. They hadn't heard from him since, but people had been asking about him. "In trouble, eh?" the clerk asked wisely. Locke nodded gravely.

The clerk leaned closer. "I had a hunch, though, that Cartwright was heading for Des Moines. Something he said—don't remember what now."

Locke took off for Des Moines with a sample of Cartwright's handwriting from the Abbot register. He canvassed the Des Moines hotels, rooming houses, motels. Finally, at a first-class hotel, he noticed the name "Marshall Carter."

Cartwright had left the Abbot on the ninth. Carter had checked into the Des Moines hotel on the tenth. The handwritings looked identical.

Locke caught up with Carter in East St. Louis. He turned out to be a middle-aged salesman of photographic equipment who hadn't been near Kansas City in a year.

End of the trail.

"Can anyone else find him?" Pearce asked.

"Not if he doesn't want to be found," Locke said shrewdly. "A nationwide search—an advertising campaign—they'd help. But if he's changed his name and doesn't go signing his new one to a lot of things that might fall into an agency's hands, nobody is going to find him. That's what you wanted, wasn't it?"

Pearce looked at him steadily, not saying anything.

"He's got no record," Locke went on. "That helps. Got a name check on him from the bigger police departments and the F.B.I. No go. No record, no fingerprints. Not under that name."

"How'd you get hurt?" Pearce asked, after a moment.

"They were waiting for me outside my office when I got back. Two of 'em. Good, too. But not good enough. 'Lay off!' they said. Okay. I'm not stupid. I'm laying off, but I wanted to finish the job first."

Pearce nodded slowly. "I'm satisfied. Send me a bill."

"Bill, nothing!" Locke growled. "Five hundred is the price. Put it in an envelope and mail it to my office—no checks. I should charge you more for using me as a stake-out, but maybe you had your reasons. Watch your step, Doc!"

He was gone then, slipping away through the shadows so quickly and silently that Pearce started to speak before he realized that the detective was not beside him. Pearce stared after him for a moment, shrugged, and opened the front door.

Going up in the elevator, he was thoughtful. In front of his apartment door, he fumbled the key out absently and inserted it in the lock. When the key wouldn't turn he took it out to check on it. He noticed then that the door was half an inch ajar.

Pearce gave the door a little push. It swung inward

noiselessly. The light from the hall streamed over his shoulder, but it only lapped a little way into the dark room. He peered into it for a moment, hunching his shoulders as if that might help.

"Come in, Dr. Pearce," someone said softly.

The lights went on.

Pearce blinked once. "Good evening, Mr. Weaver. And you, Jansen. How are you?"

"Fine, doctor," Weaver said. "Just fine."

He didn't look fine, Pearce thought. He looked older, haggard, tired. Was he worried? Weaver was sitting in his favorite chair, a green leather one beside the fireplace. Jansen was standing beside the wall switch. "You've made yourself right at home, I see."

Weaver chuckled. "We told the manager we were friends of yours, and of course he didn't doubt us. But then we are, aren't we?"

Pearce looked at Weaver and then at Jansen. "I wonder. Do you have any friends—or only hirelings?" He turned his eyes back to Weaver. "You don't look well. I'd like you to come back to the hospital for a checkup—"

"I'm feeling fine, I said." Weaver's voice lifted a little before it dropped back to a conversational tone. "We wanted to have a little talk—about cooperation."

Pearce looked at Jansen. "Funny—I don't feel very talkative. I've had a hard day."

Weaver's eyes didn't leave Pearce's face. "Get out, Carl," he said quietly.

"But Mr. Weaver—" Jansen began, his gray eyes darkening.

"Get out, Carl," Weaver repeated. "Wait for me in the car."

After Carl was gone, Pearce sank down in the armchair facing Weaver. He let his gaze drift around the room, lingering on the polished darkness of the hi-fi record player

and the slightly lighter wood of the desk in the corner. "Did you find anything?" he asked.

"Not what we were looking for," Weaver replied calmly.

"What was that?"

"Cartwright's location."

"What makes you think I'd know anything about that?"

Weaver clasped his hands lightly in his lap. "Can't we work together?"

"Certainly. What would you like to know—about your health?"

"What did you do with those samples of blood you took from me? You must have taken back that pint I got."

"Almost. Part of it we separated. Got the plasma. Separated the gamma globulin from it with zinc. Used it on various animals."

"And what did you find out?"

"The immunity is in the gamma globulin. It would be, of course. That's the immunity factor. You should see my old rat. As frisky as the youngest rat in the lab."

"So it's part of me, too?" Weaver asked.

Pearce shook his head slowly. "That's just the original globulins diluted in your blood."

"Then to live forever I would have to have periodic transfusions?"

"If it's possible to live forever," Pearce said, shrugging.

"It is. You know that. There's at least one person who's going to live forever—Cartwright. Unless something happens to him. That would be a tragedy, wouldn't it? In spite of all precautions, accidents happen. People get murdered. Can you imagine some careless kid spilling that golden blood into a filthy gutter? Some jealous woman putting a knife in that priceless body?"

"What do you want, Weaver?" Pearce asked evenly.

"You've got your reprieve from death. What more can you ask?"

"Another. And another. Without end. Why should some nobody get it by accident? What good will it do him? Or the world? He needs to be protected—and used. Properly handled, he could be worth—well, whatever men will pay for life. I'd pay a million a year—more if I had to. Other men would pay the same. We'd save the best men in the world, those who have demonstrated their ability by becoming wealthy. Oh, yes. Scientists, too—we'd select some of those. People who haven't gone into business—leaders, statesmen. . . ."

"What about Cartwright?"

"What about him?" Weaver blinked as if recalled from a lovely dream. "Do you think anyone who ever lived would have a better life, would be better protected, more pampered? Why, he wouldn't have to ask for a thing! No one would dare say no to him for fear he might kill himself. He'd be the hen that laid the golden eggs."

"He'd have everything but freedom."

"A much overrated commodity."

"The one immortal man in the world."

"That's just it," Weaver said, leaning forward. "Instead of only one, there would be many."

Pearce shook his head from side to side as if he had not heard. "A chance meeting of genes—a slight alteration by cosmic ray or something even more subtle and accidental—and immortality is created. Some immunity to death—some means of keeping the circulatory system young, resistant, rejuvenated. 'Man is as old as his arteries,' Cazali said. Take care of your arteries, and they will keep your cells immortal."

"Tell me, man! Tell me where Cartwright is before all that is lost forever." Weaver leaned forward urgently.

"A man who knows he's got a million years to live is going to be pretty darned careful," Pearce said.

"That's just it," Weaver said, his eyes narrowing. "He

doesn't know. If he'd known, he'd never have given his blood." His face changed subtly. "Or does he know—now?"

"What do you mean?"

"Didn't you tell him?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Don't you? Don't you remember going to the Abbot Hotel on the evening of the ninth, of asking for Cartwright, of talking to him? You should. The clerk identified your picture. And that night Cartwright left."

Pearce remembered the Abbot Hotel all right, the narrow, dark lobby, grimy, fly-specked. He had thought of cholera and bubonic plague as he crossed it. He remembered Cartwright, too—that fabulous creature, looking seedy and quite ordinary, who had listened, though, and believed and taken the money and gone. . . .

"I don't believe it," Pearce said.

"I should have known right away," Weaver said, as if to himself. "You knew his name that first day. When I asked for it."

"Presuming I did. If I did all that you say, do you think it was easy for me? To you he's money. What do you think he was to me? That fantastic laboratory, walking around! What wouldn't I have given to study him! To find out how his body worked, to try to synthesize the substance. You have your drives, Weaver, but I have mine."

"Why not combine them, Pearce?"

"They wouldn't mix."

"Don't get so holy, Pearce. Life isn't holy."

"Life is what we make it," Pearce said softly. "I won't have a hand in what you're planning."

Weaver got up quickly from his chair and took a step toward Pearce. "Some of you professional men get delusions of ethics," he said in a kind of muted snarl. "Not many. A few. There's nothing sacred about what you do. You're just

craftsmen, mechanics—you do a job—you get paid for it. There's no reason to get religious about it."

"Don't be absurd, Weaver. If you don't feel religious about what you do, you shouldn't be doing it. You feel religious about making money. Money's sacred to you. Well, life is sacred to me. That's what I deal in, all day long, every day. Death is an old enemy. I'll fight him until the end."

Pearce propelled himself out of his chair. He stood close to Weaver, staring fiercely into the man's eyes. "Understand this, Weaver. What you're planning is impossible. What if we all could be rejuvenated? Do you have the slightest idea what would happen? Have you considered what it might do to civilization?"

"No, I can see you haven't. Well, it would bring your society tumbling down around your pillars of gold. Civilization would shake itself to pieces like an unbalanced flywheel. Our culture is constructed on the assumption that we spend two decades growing and learning, a few more producing wealth and progeny, and a final decade or two decaying before we die.

"Look back! See what research and medicine have done in the past century. They've added a few years—just a few—to the average lifespan, and our society is groaning at the readjustment. Think what forty years would do! Think what would happen if we never died!

"There's only one way something like this can be absorbed into the race—gradually, so that society can adjust, unknowing, to this new thing inside it. All Cartwright's children will inherit the mutation. They must. It must be dominant. And they will survive, because this has the greatest survival factor ever created."

"Where is he?" Weaver asked.

"It won't work, Weaver," Pearce said, his voice rising. "I'll tell you why it won't work. Because you would kill him. You think you wouldn't, but you'd kill him as certainly as

you're a member of the human race. You'd bleed him to death, or you'd kill him just because you couldn't stand having something immortal around. You or some other warped specimen of humanity. You'd kill him, or he'd get killed in the riots of those who were denied life, tossed to the wolves of death. What people can't have they destroy. That's been proved over and over."

"Where is he?" Weaver repeated.

"It won't work for a final reason." Pearce's voice dropped as if it had found a note of pity. "But I won't tell you that. I'll let you find out for yourself."

"Where is he?" Weaver insisted softly.

"I don't know. You won't believe that. But I don't know. I didn't want to know. I told him the truth about himself, and I gave him some money, and I told him to leave town, to change his name, hide—anything, but not be found; to be fertile, to populate the earth. . . ."

"I don't believe you. You've got him hidden away for yourself. You wouldn't give him a thousand dollars for nothing."

"You know the amount?" Pearce asked.

Weaver's lip curled. "I know every deposit you've made in the last five years, and every withdrawal. You're small, Pearce, and you're cheap, and I'm going to break you."

Pearce smiled, unworried. "No, you're not. You don't dare use violence, because I just might know where Cartwright is hiding. Then you'd lose everything. And you won't try anything else because if you do I'll release the article I've written about Cartwright—I'll send you a copy—and then the fat would really be in the fire. If everybody knew about Cartwright, you wouldn't have a chance to control it, even if you could find him."

At the door, Weaver turned and said, calmly, "I'll be seeing you again."

"That's right," Pearce agreed, and thought, *I've been no*

help to you, because you won't ever believe that I haven't got a string tied to Cartwright.

But you're not the one I pity.

Two days after that came the news of Weaver's marriage, an elopement with a twenty-five-year-old girl from the country club district, a Patricia Warren. It was the weekend sensation—wealth and beauty, age and youth.

Pearce studied the girl's picture in the Sunday paper and told himself that surely she had got what she wanted. And Weaver—Pearce knew him well enough to know that he had got what he wanted. Weaver's heir would already be assured. Otherwise, Weaver would never risk himself and his empire in a woman's hands. There were reliable tests even this early.

The fourth week since the transfusion passed uneventfully, and the fifth week was only distinguished by a summons from Jansen, which Pearce ignored. The beginning of the sixth week brought a frantic call from Dr. Easter. Pearce refused to go to Weaver's newly purchased mansion.

They brought him to the hospital in a screaming ambulance, clearing the streets ahead of it with its siren and its flashing red light, dodging through the traffic with its precious cargo: Money, personified.

Pearce stood beside the hard hospital bed, checking the pulse in the bony wrist, and stared down at the emaciated body. It made no impression in the bed. In the silence, the harsh unevenness of the old man's breathing was loud. The only movement was the spasmodic rise and fall of the sheet that covered the old body.

He was living—barely. He had used up his allotted three-score years and ten. It wasn't merely that he was dying. We all are. With him it was imminent.

The pulse was feeble. The gift of youth had been taken

away. Within the space of a few days, Weaver had been drained of color, drained of forty years of life.

He was an old man, dying. His face was yellowish over grayish blue, the color of death. It was bony, the wrinkled skin pulled back like a mask for the skull. Once he might have been handsome. Now his eyes were sunken, the closed eyelids dark over them, and his nose was a thin, arching beak.

This time, Pearce thought distantly, there will be no reprieve.

"I don't understand," Dr. Easter muttered. "I thought he'd been given forty years—"

"That was his conclusion," Pearce said. "It was more like forty days. Thirty to forty days—that's how long the gamma globulin remains in the bloodstream. It was only a passive immunity. The only person with any lasting immunity to death is Cartwright, and the only ones he can give it to are his children."

Easter looked around to see if the nurse was listening and whispered, "Couldn't we handle this better? Chance needs a little help sometimes. With semen banks and artificial insemination we could change the make-up of the human race in a couple of generations—"

"If we weren't all wiped out first," Pearce said, and turned away.

He waited, his eyes closed, listening to the harshness of Weaver's breathing, thinking of the tragedy of life and death—the being born and the dying, entwined, all one, and here was Weaver who had run out of life, and there was his child who would not be born for months yet. It was a continuity, a balance—a life for a life, and it had kept humanity stable for millions of years.

And yet—immortality? What might it mean?

He thought of Cartwright, the immortal, the hunted man. While men remembered they would never let him rest, and

if he got tired of hiding and running, he was doomed. The search would go on and on—crippled a little, fortunately, now that Weaver had dropped away—and Cartwright, with his burden, would never be able to live like other men.

He thought of him, trying to adjust to immortality in the midst of death, and he thought that immortality—the greatest gift, surely, that a man could receive—demanded payment in kind, like everything else. For immortality, you must surrender the right to live.

God pity you, Cartwright.

“Transfusion, Dr. Pearce?” the nurse repeated.

“Oh, yes,” he said hastily. “Might as well.” He looked down at Weaver once more. “Send down a requisition. We know his type already—O negative.”