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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK JAMIESON ***



JAMIESON

By BILL DOEDE

Illustrated by GRAY

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***A Konv cylinder was the key to space—but
there was one power it could not match!***

They lived in a small house beside the little Wolf river in Wisconsin. Once it had been a summer cottage owned by a rich man from Chicago. The rich man died. His heirs sold it. Now it was well insulated and Mrs. Jamieson and her son were very comfortable, even in the coldest winter. During the summer they rented a few row boats to vacationing fishermen, and she had built a few overnight cabins beside the road. They were able to make ends meet.

Her neighbors knew nothing of the money she had brought with her to Wisconsin. They didn't even know that she was not a native. She never spoke of it, except at first, when Earl was a boy of seven and they had just come there to live. Then she only said that she came from the East. She knew the names of eastern Wisconsin towns, and small facts about them; it lent an air of authenticity to her claim of being a native. Actually her previous residence was Bangkok, Siam, where the Agents had killed her husband.

That was back in '07, on the eve of his departure for Alpha Centaurus; but she never spoke of this; and she was very careful not to move from place to place except by the conventional methods of travel.

Also, she wore her hair long, almost to the shoulders. People said, "There goes one of the old-fashioned ones. That hair-do was popular back in the sixties." They did not suspect that she did this only to cover the thin, pencil-line scar, evidence that a small cylinder lay under her skin behind the ear.



For Mrs. Jamieson was one of the Konvs.

Her husband had been one of the small group who developed this tiny instrument. Not the inventor—*his* name was Stinson, and the effects produced by it were known as the Stinson Effect. In appearance it resembled a small semi-conductor device. Analysis by the best scientific minds proved it to be a semi-conductor.

Yet it held the power to move a body instantly from one point in space to any other point. Each unit was custom built, keyed to operate only by the thought pattern of the particular individual.

Several times in the past seven years Mrs. Jamieson had seen other Konvs, and had been tempted to identify herself and say, "Here I am. You are one of them; so am I. Come, and we'll talk. We'll talk about Stinson and Benjamin, who helped them all get away. And Doctor Straus. And my husband, E. Mason Jamieson, who never got away because those filthy, unspeakable Agents shot

him in the back, there in that coffee shop in Bangkok, Siam."

Once, in the second year after her husband's death, an Agent came and stayed in one of her cabins.

She learned that he was an Agent completely by accident. While cleaning the cabin one morning his badge fell out of a shirt pocket. She stood still, staring at the horror of it there on the floor, the shirt in her hands, all the loneliness returning in a black wave of hate and frustration.

That night she soundlessly lifted the screen from the window over his bed and shot him with a .22 rifle.

She threw the weapon into the river. It helped very little. He was one Agent, only one out of all the thousands of Agents all over Earth; while her husband had been one of twenty-eight persons. She decided then that her efforts would be too ineffective. The odds were wrong. She would wait until her son, Earl, was grown.

Together they would seek revenge. He did not have the cylinder—not yet. But he would. The Konvs took care of their own.

Her husband had been one of the first, and they would not forget. One day the boy would disappear for a few hours. When he returned the small patch of gauze would be behind his ear. She would shield him until the opening healed. Then no one would ever know, because now they could do it without leaving the tell-tale scar. Then they would seek revenge.

Later they would go to Alpha Centaurus, where a life free from Agents could be lived.

It happened to Earl one hot summer day when he was fourteen. Mrs. Jamieson was working in her kitchen; Earl supposedly was swimming with his friends in the river. Suddenly he appeared before her, completely nude. At sight of his mother his face paled and he began to shake violently, so that she was forced to slap him to prevent hysteria. She looked behind his ear.

It was there.

"Mom!" he cried. "Mom!"

He went to the window and looked out toward the river, where his friends were still swimming in the river, with great noise and delight. Apparently they did not miss him. Mrs. Jamieson handed him a pair of trousers. "Here, get yourself dressed. Then we'll talk."

He started for his room, but she stopped him. "No, do it right here. You may as well get used to it now."

"Get used to what?"

"To people seeing you nude."

"What?"

"Never mind. What happened just now?"

"I was swimming in the river, and a man came down to the river. His hair was all white, and his eyes looked like ... well, I never saw eyes like his before. He asked who was Earl Jamieson, and I said I was. Then he said, 'Come with me.' I went with him. I don't know why. It seemed the right thing. He took me to a car and there was another man in it, that looked like the first one only he was bigger. We went to a house, not far away and went inside. And that's all I can remember until I woke up. I was on a table, sort of. A high table. There was a light over it. It was all strange, and the two men stood there talking in some language I don't know."

Earl ran his hand through his hair, shaking his head. "I don't remember clearly, I guess. I was looking around the room and I remember thinking how scared I was, and how nice it would be to be here with you. And then I was here."

Earl faced the window, looking out, then turned quickly back. "What is it?" he asked, desperately. "What happened to me?"

"Better put your trousers on," Mrs. Jamieson said. "It's something very unusual and terrible to think of at first, but really wonderful."

"But what happened? What is this patch behind my ear?"

Suddenly his face paled and he stopped in the act of getting into his trousers. "Guess I know now. They made me a Konv."

"Well, don't take on so. You'll get used to it."

"But they shouldn't have! They didn't even ask me!"

He started for the door, but she called him back. "No, don't run away from it now. This is the time to face it. There are two sides to every story, you know. You hear only one side in school—their side. There is also *our* side."

He turned back, a dawning comprehension showing in his eyes. "That's right, you're one, too."

That is why you killed that Agent in the third cabin."

It was her turn to be surprised. "You knew about that?"

"I saw you. I wasn't sleeping. I was afraid to stay inside alone, so I followed you. I never told anyone."

"But you were only nine!"

"They would have taken you away if I'd said anything."

Mrs. Jamieson held out her hand. "Come here, son. It's time I told you about us."

So he sat across the kitchen table from her, and she told the whole history, beginning with Stinson sitting in the laboratory in New Jersey, holding in his hand a small cylinder moulded from silicon with controlled impurities. He had made it, looking for a better micro-circuit structure. He was holding this cylinder ... and it was a cold day outside ... and he was dreaming of a sunny Florida beach—

And suddenly he was there, on the beach. He could not believe it at first. He felt the sand and water, and felt of himself; there was no mistake.

On the plane back to New Jersey he came to certain conclusions regarding the strange power of his device. He tried it again, secretly. Then he made more cylinders. He was the only man in the world who knew how to construct it, and he kept the secret, giving cylinders to selected people. He worked out the basic principle, calling it a kinetic ordinate of negative vortices, which was very undefinitive.

It was a subject of wonder and much speculation, but no one took serious notice of them until one night a federal Agent arrested one man for indecency. It was a valid charge. One disadvantage of this method of travel was that, while a body could travel instantaneously to any chosen spot, it arrived without clothes.

The arrested man disappeared from his jail cell, and the next morning the Agent was found strangled to death in his bed. This set off a campaign against Konvs. One base act led to another, until the original reason for noticing them at all was lost. Normal men no longer thought of them as human.

Mrs. Jamieson told how Stinson, knowing he had made too many cylinders and given them unwisely, left Earth for Alpha Centaurus.

He went alone, not knowing if he could go so far, or what he would find when he arrived. But he did arrive, and it was what he had sought.

He returned for the others. They gathered one night in a dirty, broken-down farmhouse in Missouri—and disappeared in a body, leaving the Agents standing helplessly on Earth, shaking their fists at the sky.

"You have asked many times," Mrs. Jamieson said, "how your father died. Now I will tell you the truth. Your father was one of the great ones, along with Stinson and Benjamin and Dr. Straus. He helped plan the escape; but the Agents found him in Bangkok fifteen minutes before the group left. They shot him in the back, and the others had to go on without him. Now do you know why I killed the Agent in the third cabin? I had to. Your father was a great man, and I loved him."

"I don't blame you, mother," Earl said simply. "But we are freaks. Everybody says, 'Konv' as if it is something dirty. They write it on the walls in rest rooms."

"Of course they do—because they don't understand! They are afraid of us. Wouldn't you be afraid of someone who could do the things we do, if you *couldn't* do them?"

Just like that, it was over.

That is, the first shock was over. Mrs. Jamieson watched Earl leave the house, walking slowly along the river, a boy with a man's problems. His friends called to him from the river, but he chose not to hear. He wanted to be alone. He needed to think, to feel the newness of the thing.

Perhaps he would cross the river and enter the deep forest there. When the initial shock wore off he might experiment with his new power. He would not travel far, in these first attempts. Probably he would stay within walking distance of his clothes, because he still lacked the tricks others had learned.

It was a hot, mucky afternoon with storm clouds pushing out of the west. Mrs. Jamieson put on her swimming suit and wandered down to the river to cool herself.

For the remainder of that summer they worked together. They practiced at night mostly, taking longer and longer jumps, until Earl's confidence allowed him to reach any part of the Earth he chose. She knew the habits of Agents. She knew how to avoid them.

They would select a spot sufficiently remote to insure detection, she would devise some prank to irritate the Agents; then they would quickly return to Wisconsin. The Agents would rush to the calculated spot, but would find only the bare footprints of a woman and a boy. They would swear

and drive back to their offices to dig through files, searching for some clue to their identity.

It was inevitable that they should identify Mrs. Jamieson as one of the offenders, since they had discovered, even before Stinson took his group to Centaurus, that individuals had thought patterns peculiar to themselves. These could be identified, if caught on their detectors, and even recorded for the files. But the files proved confusing, for they said that Mrs. Jamieson had gone to Centaurus with the others.

Had she returned to Earth? The question did not trouble them long. They had more serious problems. Stinson had selected only the best of the Konvs when he left Earth, leaving all those with criminal tendencies behind. They could have followed if they chose—what could stop them? But it was more lucrative to stay. On Earth they could rob, loot, even murder—without fear of the law.

Earl changed.

Even before the summer was over, he matured. The childish antics of his friends began to bore him. "Be careful, Earl," his mother would say. "Remember who you are. Play with them sometimes, even if you don't like it. You have a long way to go before you will be ready."

During the long winter evenings, after they had watched their favorite video programs, they would sit by the fireplace. "Tell me about the great ones," he would say, and she would repeat all the things she remembered about Stinson and Benjamin and Straus. She never tired of discussing them. She would tell about Benjamin's wife, Lisa, and try to describe the horror in Lisa's young mind when the news went out that E. Mason Jamieson had been killed. She wanted him to learn as much as possible about his father's death, knowing that soon the Agents would be after Earl. They were so clever, so persistent. She wanted him to be ready, not only in ways of avoiding their traps ... but ready with a heart full of hate.

Sometimes when she talked about her husband, Mrs. Jamieson wanted to stand up and scream at her son, "Hate, hate! Hate! You must learn to hate!" But she clenched her hands over her knitting, knowing that he would learn it faster if she avoided the word.

The winter passed, and the next summer, and two more summers.

Earl was ready for college. They had successfully kept their secret. They had been vigilant in every detail. Earl referred to the "damn Agents" now with a curl of his lip. They had been successful in contacting other Konvs, and sometimes visited them at a remote rendezvous.

"When you have finished college," Mrs. Jamieson told her son, "we will go to Centaurus."

"Why not now?"

"Because when you get there they will need men who can contribute to the development of the planet. Stinson is a physicist, Benjamin a metallurgist, Straus a doctor. But Straus is an old man by this time. A young doctor will be needed. Study hard, Earl. Learn all you can. Even the great ones get sick."

She did not mention her secret hope, that before they left Earth he would have fully avenged his father's death. He was clever and intelligent.

He could kill many Agents.

So she exhumed the money she had hidden more than ten years before. The house beside the Little Wolf river was sold. They found a modest bungalow within walking distance of the University's medical school. Mrs. Jamieson furnished it carefully but, oddly, rather lavishly.

This was her husband's money she was spending now. It needed to last only a few years. Then they would leave Earth forever.

A room was built on the east side of the bungalow, with its own private entrance. This was Earl's room. Ostensibly the private entrance was for convenience due to the irregular hours of college students.

It was also convenient for coming home late at night after Agent hunting.

Mrs. Jamieson was becoming obvious.

Excitement brought color to her cheeks when she thought of Earl facing one of them—a lean, cunning jaguar facing a fat, lazy bear. It was her notion that federal Agents were evil creatures, tools of a decadent, bloodthirsty society, living off the fat of the land.

She painted the room herself, in soft, pastel colors. When it was finished she showed Earl regally into the room, making a big joke of it.

"Here you can study and relax, and have those bull sessions students are always having," she said.

"There will be no friends," he answered, "not here. No Konvs will be at the university."

"Why not? Stinson selected only educated, intelligent people. When one dies the cylinder is taken and adjusted to a new thought pattern—usually a person from the same family. I would say it is very likely that Konvs will be found here."

He shook his head. "No. They knew we were coming, and no one said a word about others being here. I'm afraid we are alone."

"Well, I think not," she said firmly. "Anyway, the room will be comfortable."

He shook his head again. "Why can't I be in the house with you? There are two bedrooms."

She said quickly, "You can if you wish. I just thought you'd like being alone, at your age. Most boys do."

"I'm not like most boys, mother. The Konvs saw to that. Sometimes I'm sorry. Back in high school I used to wish I was like the others. Do you remember Lorane Peters?" His mother nodded. "Well, when we were seniors last year she liked me quite a lot. She didn't say so, but I knew it. She would sit across the aisle from me, and sometimes when I saw how her hair fell over her face when she read, I wanted to lean over and whisper to her, 'Hey, Lorrie—' just as if I was human—'can I take you to the basketball game?'"

Mrs. Jamieson turned to leave the room, but he stopped her. "You understand what I'm saying, don't you?"

"No, I don't!" she said sharply. "You're old enough to face realities. You are a Konv. You always will be a Konv. *Have you forgotten your own father?*"

She turned her back and slammed the door. Earl stood very still for a long time in the room that was to have been happy for him. She was crying just beyond the wall.

Earl did not use the room that first year. He slept in the second bedroom. He did not mention his frustrated desires to be normal, not after the first attempt, but he persisted in his efforts to be so. Use of the cylinder was out of the question for them now, anyway.

In the spring Mrs. Jamieson caught a virus cold which resulted in a long convalescence. Earl moved into the new bedroom. At first she thought he moved in an effort to please her because of the illness, but she soon grew aware of her mistake.

One day he disappeared.

Mrs. Jamieson was alarmed. Had the Agents found him? She watched the papers daily for some word of Konvs being killed.

The second day after his disappearance she found a small item. A Konv had raided the Agent's office in Stockholm, killing three, and getting killed himself. Mrs. Jamieson dropped the paper immediately and went to Stockholm. She did not consider the risk. In Stockholm she found clothes and made discreet inquiries. The slain man had been a Finnish Konv, one of those left behind by Stinson as an undesirable. His wife had been killed by the Agents the week before. He had gone completely insane and made the raid singlehanded. Mrs. Jamieson read the account of crimes committed by the man and his wife, and determined to prevent Earl from making the mistake of taking on more than he could handle.

When she arrived at her own home, Earl was in his room.

"Where have you been?" she asked petulantly.

"Oh, here and there."

"I thought you were involved in that fight in Stockholm."

He shook his head.

She stood in the doorway and watched him leaning over his desk, attempting to write something on a sheet of paper. She was proud of his profile, tow-headed as a boy, handsome in a masculine way. He cracked his knuckles nervously.

"What did you do?" she asked.

Suddenly he flung the pencil down, jumped from his chair and paced the floor. "I talked to an Agent last night," he said.

"Where?"

"Bangkok."

Mrs. Jamieson had to sit down. Finally she was able to ask, "How did it happen?"

"I broke into the office there to get at the records. He caught me."

"What were you looking for?"

"I wanted to learn the names of the men who killed Father." He said the word strangely. He was unaccustomed to it.

"Did you find them?"

He pointed to the paper on his desk. Mrs. Jamieson, trembling, picked it up and read the names. Seeing them there, written like any other names would be written, made her furious. How could they? How could the names of murderers look like ordinary names? When she thought them in her mind, they even sounded like ordinary names—and they shouldn't! She had always thought that those names, if she ever saw them, would be filthy, unholy scratches on paper, evil sounds,

like the rustle of bedclothes to a jealous lover listening at a keyhole. "Tom Palieu" didn't sound evil; neither did "Al Jonson." She was shaken by this more than she would permit Earl to see.

"Why did you want the names?"

"I don't know," he said. "Curiosity, maybe, or a subconscious desire for revenge. I just wanted to see them."

"Tell me what happened! If an Agent saw you ... well, either he killed you or you killed him. But you're here alive."

"I didn't kill him. That's what seems so strange. And he didn't try to kill me. We didn't even fight. He didn't ask why I broke in without breaking the lock or even a window. He seemed to know. He did ask what I was doing there, and who I was. I told him, and ... he helped me get the names. He asked where I lived. 'None of your damn business,' I told him. Then he said he didn't blame me for not telling, that Konvs must fear Agents, and hate them. Then he said, 'Do you know why we kill Konvs? We kill them because there is no prison cell in the world that will hold a Konv. When they break the law, we have no choice. It is a terrible thing, but must be done. We don't want your secret; we only want law and order. There is room enough in the world for both of us.'"

Mrs. Jamieson was furious. "And you believed him?"

"I don't know. I just know what he said—and that he let me go without trying to shoot me."

Mrs. Jamieson stopped on her way out of the room and laid a hand on his arm. "Your father would have been proud of you," she said. "Soon you will learn the truth about the Agents."

Beyond the closed door, out of sight of her son, Mrs. Jamieson gave rein to the excitement that ran through her. He had wanted the names! He didn't know why—not yet—but he would. "He'll do it yet!" she whispered to the flowered wallpaper. She didn't care that no one heard her.

She didn't know where the men were now, those who had killed her husband. They could be anywhere. Agents moved from post to post; in ten years they might be scattered all over Earth. In the killing of Konvs, some cylinders might even be taken by Agents—and used by them, for the power and freedom the cylinders gave must be coveted even by them. And they were in the best position to gain them. She was consumed by fear that one or more of the men on Earl's list might have acquired a cylinder and were now Konvs themselves.

Two weeks later she read a news item saying that Tom Palieu had been killed by a Konv. The assassin's identity was unknown, but agents were working on the case.

She knew. She had found a gun in Earl's desk.

She took the paper into Earl's room. "Did you do this?"

He turned away from her. "It doesn't matter whether I did or not. They will suspect me. His name was on the list."

"They will," she agreed. "It doesn't matter who the Konv is, now that an Agent has been killed. The one in Bangkok will tell them about you and the list of names, and it's all they need."

"Well, what else can he do?" Earl asked. "After all, he is an Agent. If one of them is killed, he will have to tell what he knows."

"You're defending him? Why?" she cried. "Tell me why!"

He removed her hand from his arm. Her nails were digging into his flesh. "I don't know why. Mother, I'm sorry, but Agents are just people to me. I can't hate them the way you do."

Mrs. Jamieson's face colored, then drained white.

Suddenly, with a wide, furious sweep of her hand, she slapped his face. So much strength and rage was in her arm that the blow almost sent him spinning. They faced each other, she breathing hard from the exertion, Earl stunned immobile—not by the blow, but from the knowledge that she could hate so suddenly, viciously.

She controlled herself. "We must find a way to leave here," she said, calmly.

"They won't find us."

"Oh, yes they will," she said. "Don't underestimate them. Agents are picked from the most intelligent people on Earth. It will be a small job for them. Don't forget they know who you are. Even if you hadn't been so stupid as to tell them, they'd know. They knew my pattern from the time your father was alive. They got yours when we were together years ago, teasing them. They linked your pattern with mine. They know that your father and I had a son. Your birth was recorded. The only difficult aspect of their job now is to find where you live, and it won't be impossible. They will drive their cars through every city on Earth with those new detectors, until they pick up your pattern or mine. I'm afraid it's time to leave Earth."

Earl sat down suddenly, "It's just as well. I thought maybe some day I might hate them too, or learn to like them. But I can do neither, so I am halfway between, and no man can live this way."

She did not answer him. Finally he said, "It doesn't make sense to you, does it?"

"No, it doesn't. This is not the time for such discussions, anyway. The Agents have their machines working at top speed, while we sit here and talk."

Suddenly they were not alone.

No sound was generated by the man's coming. One instant they were talking alone, the next he was here. Earl saw him first. He was a middle-aged man whose hair was completely white. He stood near the desk, easily, as if standing there were the most natural way to relax. He was entirely nude ... but it seemed natural and right.

Then Mrs. Jamieson saw him.

"Benjamin!" she cried. "I knew someone would come."

He smiled. "This is your son?"

"Yes," she said. "We are ready."

"I remember when you were born," he said, and smiled in reminiscence. "Your father was afraid you would be twins."

Earl said, "Why was my father killed?"

"By mistake. Back in those days, like now, there were good Konvs and bad. One of those not selected by Stinson to join us was enraged, half crazy with envy. He killed two women there in Bangkok. The Agents thought Jamieson—I mean, your father—did it. Jamieson was the greatest man among us. It was he who first conceived the theory that there was a basic, underlying law in the operation of the cylinders. Even now, no one knows how the idea of love ties in with the Stinson Effect; but we do know that hate and greed as motivating forces can greatly minimize the cylinders' power. That is why the undesirables with cylinders have never reached Centaurus."

Heavy steps sounded on the porch outside.

"We'd better hurry," Mrs. Jamieson said.

Benjamin held out his hands. They took them, to increase the power of the cylinders. As the Agents pounded on the door, Mrs. Jamieson flicked one thought of hatred at them, but of course they did not hear her. Benjamin's hands gripped tightly.

Mrs. Jamieson slowly opened her eyes....

She no longer felt the hands. *She was still in the room!* Benjamin and her son were gone. Her outstretched hands touched nothing.

Her power was gone!

The Agents stepped into the room over the broken door. She stared at them, then ran to Earl's desk, fumbling for the gun.

The Agents' guns rattled.

Love, Benjamin said, the greatest of these is love. Or did someone else say that? Someone, somewhere, perhaps in another time, in some misty, forgotten chip of time long gone, in another frame of reference perhaps....

Mrs. Jamieson could not remember, before she died.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK JAMIESON ***

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